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MEMOIR

OF THE POLITICAL LIFE

OF THE RIGHT HON.

EDMUND BURKE.

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MEMOIR

OF THE

POLITICAL LIFE OF

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

EDMUND BURKE;

WITH EXTRACTS FROM HIS WRITINGS.

"Burke, the greatest of political philosophers."

SIR J. MACKINTOSH.

BY

GEORGE CROLY, LL.D.

RECTOR OF ST STEPHEN'S, WALBROOK, LONDON.

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PREFACE.

SOME years ago, when the feelings of the people were strongly disturbed by theories of political change, a considerable number of works were issued from the press, with the object of allaying the public excitement. Among the rest the following pages appeared. It was thought, that, in a period singularly resembling that which immediately preceded the French Revolution of 1789, there might be some advantage in laying before the public, in a more succinct and accessible form than in his volumes, the opinions of that extraordinary and powerful mind, which had acted so large a part in saving England and her monarchy from the errors of the French throne, and the crimes of the Republic.

The rank of Burke, as a writer of consummate eloquence, had been decided from the beginning of his career; the progress of the Revolution placed him in equal eminence as a Statesman; and every year since has added to his renown as a prophet. While the works of this admirable mind are left to us, the country is in possession of a storehouse of political wisdom, from which she cannot supply herself too largely, or too often; she has a great Oracle, to whose responses she cannot trust with a too solemn reliance; for the peculiar and pre-eminent character of Burke's genius was its love of reality. With the most palpable powers for reaching the loftiest heights of speculation, he is the least abstract of all speculators. With the poetic fancy which so strongly tempts its possessor to spurn the ground,

> "Among the colours of the rainbow live,
> And play in the plighted clouds,"

and with an opulence of language that, like the tissues thrown on the road of an oriental prince, covered the wild and the thorny before him

with richness and beauty, he never suffers himself to forget the value of *things*. The application of reason to the purposes of life; the study of the sources of moral strength; the inquiry into that true "wealth of nations," which makes men safer from the shocks of society, are his perpetual object.—He pours his river through the moral landscape, not to astonish by its rapidity and volume, or delight by its picturesque windings, but to carry fertility on its surface, and gold in its sands.

The papers which form the present publication originally appeared in Blackwood's Magazine, a work which, by the constitutional truth and manliness of its principles, had acquired extensive credit with a people, who love fair-dealing and fearlessness like their own. The republicanism which they then offered their contribution to oppose, has since broken out, with still more formidable menace to the State. The boldest pretext of overthrow had hitherto never gone beyond the "improvement of the Constitution." But, we now hear a demand for

a new fabric. What was once Reform, is now Revolution; Monarchy, once admitted by all parties to be the natural Government of the State, is now pronounced a prejudice, and the popular aspiration is Democracy. And this new terror is no dream of the study; no thin shape of mysticism floating before the eyes of visionaries; Ribandism and Chartism are its substantial forms. However widely differing in their origin, their determination is the same. Travelling by different routes, they march to the same point; and whether hatred of the Church leads them to subvert the Throne, or hatred of the Throne, to subvert the Church, neither will have achieved its object, until both meet on the ruins of the Constitution. That the property and intelligence of the Empire, when once roused, will resist courageously, and if roused early enough will resist triumphantly, is beyond question. But it will be too late, when the twin conspiracies shall have become one, and when the people of England shall see some new and monstrous shape of govern-

ment demanding their submission ; some huge, crude, and presumptuous Babel of Society, at once threatening Earth, and insulting Heaven ; some new " City and Tower" of infidel building ; where the Democratic Principle, known only by its evil attributes ; like an Indian Idol, with its hundred hands grasping only swords and serpents ; shall sit to be worshipped with the horrid and sanguinary rites of superstition, or the still more horrid impurities of popular passion, let loose to riot without fear of God or man.

That the nation may yet emerge from those trials ; we may be justified in believing, for she had emerged before. But it is equally evident, that if she does, it must be by the same vigour, and virtue, which then ensured her safety. When Burke wrote his immortal " Reflections on the French Revolution," there were thousands in England as full of frenzy, as ever were the wearers of crowns of straw. Every public sense was in a state of illusion, France was the great-

temptress, and to the multitude, her naked antics were dignity, her blasphemies the language of nature, and her unspeakable bloodshed the inevitable price of freedom. A crowd of writers, some of remarkable popular ability, and all of popular fame, laboured to increase and envenom the national frenzy, some by dazzling the people with projects of confiscation, others, by exciting their jealousy of rank, and others, by alluring the uneducated pride of the mind, and playing before it theories of unlimited progress, and brilliant perfectibility. Those arts had nearly succeeded ; the soberness and sincerity of the national spirit were universally silenced for the time ; the haughty effrontery and contemptuous scoffing of the new school of freedom and philosophy, bore down all idea of resistance; and the purer understanding of England seemed spell-bound, like Milton's noble Lady ;

" In stony fetters fixt and motionless,"

while the shapes of this revolutionary revel were triumphing and glittering before her. But,

a more powerful presence was to come, and rebuke them ; a genius of a loftier rank, and borrowing its strength from sources above the cup of the enchanter, burst in, broke his wand, and turning the revellers into their true shapes of grossness and vice, freed the captive of the spell. This was the achievement of Burke, and none was ever more effective, or more essential to the peace of an empire.

It is in no affectation of public danger, that those who wish well to their country, now call on it, to prepare. The whole course of public measures, for the last seven years, has been *republican*. The changes of public men within that period have scarcely affected this strong tendency of things. If the feeble have given way, and the corrupt have only made the course more headlong ; the firmest helmsmen of the State have felt the current too strong for them, to return. Whether yielding, or resisting, every hour has brought us nearer the verge of that mighty cataract, of which we already hear the roar.

The Extracts from Burke's published works are made in an order illustrative of his personal feelings, his public career, and the national exigencies of his time. They are accompanied with notices of the events of his private life, chiefly from his Biography by Mr Prior; and with remarks connected with the circumstances of the anxious period in which we live; the whole forming an anti-revolutionary MANUAL of the wisdom of the wisest of men.

CONTENTS

OF

VOLUME FIRST.

CHAPTER I.

Value of Biography—Birth of Burke—Early Scenery—Education—Fondness for Milton—Destined to the Bar—Arrival in London—Proposes to go to America—Attacks Bolingbroke—Johnson's praise of Burke—Earl of Charlemont—Connexion with Single-Speech Hamilton, - - - - Page 1

CHAPTER II.

Burke appointed Private Secretary to Rockingham—Member for Wendover—His first Speech—Chatham's Ministry—Picture of Party, - - - - - - - - 35

CHAPTER III.

Death of George II.—Fall of Chatham—Origin of the Modern Whigs—Burke's Pamphlet—His Eloquence—Purchased Beaconsfield—Speech on Subscription to the Articles—Letters to Barry, - - - - - - - 57

CHAPTER IV.

Election for Bristol—Speech at the Hustings—Popular Delusions —Famous Speech on American Affairs—Apostrophe to Lord Bathurst—Keen Parody by Johnson, - - Page 89

CHAPTER V.

Prevents the Rockingham Secession—Franklin—Absentee Tax—Alliance of France with America—Burke loses his Seat for Bristol—Speech on the Household—French Finance—Neckar, 108

CHAPTER VI.

Public Opinion of the Speech—On Œconomical Reform—Eloquence of Public Men—Burke Retires from Bristol—Fine Sketch of Howard—The Borough System—Crabbe the Poet—Character of Fox—Modern Whiggism, - - - 142

CHAPTER VII.

Fox, the leader of the Ministry—Death of Rockingham—Pitt Minister—The Coalition—The India Bill—New Era of Europe—Grattan's Opinion of Burke, - - - - 164

CHAPTER VIII.

Nabob of Arcot—Burke's Speech on India Affairs—Hyder Ali—Hastings—Dupleix, - - - - - 183

CHAPTER IX.

Character of Burke by the Bishop of Rochester—Trial of Hastings —Twelve Maxims of Genghiz Khan, - - - 209

CHAPTER X.

Speeches on the Trial—Styles of Sheridan and Burke Contrasted —Striking Remark of Hastings, - - - Page 234

CHAPTER XI.

French Infidelity—Providential Protection of England—Riots of 1780—Power of Pitt—French Revolution—Burke's Singular Sagacity, - - - - - - - - 253

CHAPTER XII.

Burke's Taste for the Arts—Reynolds—Barry—Burke's Criticism on the Pictures at the Adelphi—True Cause of Republicanism, 270

CHAPTER XIII.

Debate on the Army Estimates—Burke's Schism with Fox—and with Sheridan—Publication of the celebrated "Reflections"—Public honours to its Writer—Visit of Paine to England—Pitt's Views of the Revolution, - - - - - 287

MEMOIR

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CHAPTER I.

Value of Biography—Birth of Burke—Early Scenery—Education—Fondness for Milton—Destined to the Bar—Arrival in London—Proposes to go to America—Attacks Bolingbroke—Johnson's praise of Burke—Earl of Charlemont—Connexion with Single-Speech Hamilton.

THE people of England are attached to liberty, and they are made for it. They have, by nature, a gravity of mind, which tends to save them from political rashness. They have a manliness which repels dishonourable submission to force. Thus, superior by their original temperament, alike to the extravagances of democracy, and to the severities of despotism, they alone, of all European nations, have been qualified to build up that last and noblest labour of utility and virtue, a free Constitution.

Yet while nations are composed of men, they must be liable to error. Opinion must exhibit those currents and changes which defy, or astonish, the wisdom

of the wise. Strong temptations to hasty aggrandizement, or rash terrors of public loss, must try the practical knowledge of the state; and England, with all her experience, vigour, and virtue, must take her share in those contingencies which compel nations to revert to first principles, and refresh their declining years by draughts from the original fountains of their fame. It is for such purposes that the lover of his country peculiarly values history. He opens the door of that great repository of the crime and frailties, of the genius and power, of ages which have gone down to the grave; less to gaze on them as curious specimens of the past, than as true instructors of the present. He sees in their configuration the secrets of the living frame, the sources of actual public strength, the organs of national renown, the fine impulses which give activity and force to the whole animated system of Empire.

But the most effectual portion of history is that which gives down great men to the future; for it furnishes the mind of the rising generation with a model on which it can shape itself at once. The embodied virtue of the champion of truth and freedom there stands before us; the progress of ability and learning, of generous ambition and faithful principle, is displayed to the eye in all its successions; there is nothing ideal, nothing to be made up by fancy, or left to chance. The standard of excellence is palpable to the touch; and men can scarcely look upon this illustrious evidence of human capabilities, without unconsciously emulating its labours, and sharing its superiority.

In giving a rapid view of the life of the celebrated

BURKE, these pages are less anxious to render the due tribute to his talents, than to his principles. His genius has long gained for itself the highest prize of fame. In an age eminent for intellectual distinction, Burke vindicated to himself the admiration of Europe. Owing nothing of his celebrity to birth, opulence, or official rank, he required none of those adventitious supports, to rise and move at ease in the highest regions of public effect, dignity, and renown. There was no fear that his plumage would give way in either the storm or the sunshine; those are the casualties of inferior powers. He had his share of both, the tempest, and that still more perilous trial, which has melted down the virtue of so many aspiring spirits in the favour of cabinets. But Burke grew purer, and more powerful for good, to his latest moment; he constantly rose more and more above the influence of party, until at last the politician was elevated into the philosopher; and in that loftier atmosphere, from which he looked down on the cloudy and turbulent contests of the time, he soared upward calmly in the light of truth, and became more splendid at every wave of his wing.

This is no exaggeration of his singular ability, or of its course. Of all the memorable men of his day, Burke is the only orator, whose eloquence has been incorporated into the wisdom of his country. His great contemporaries grappled triumphantly with the emergencies of the hour, and having achieved the exploit of the hour, were content with what they had done. But it is palpable, that Burke in every instance

contemplated a larger victory; that his struggle was not more to meet a contingency, than to establish a principle; that he was not content with overwhelming the adversary of the moment, but must bequeath with that triumph some new knowledge of the means by which the adversary might be overwhelmed in every age to come—some noble contribution to that grand tactic by which men and nations are armed and marshalled against all difficulty. The labours of his contemporaries were admirable; the mere muscular force of the human mind never exhibited more prodigious feats, than in the political contests of the days of Chatham, Holland, Pitt and Fox. The whole period from the fall of the Walpole Ministry to the death of Pitt, was an unrelaxing struggle of the most practised, expert, and vivid ability. But it was the struggle of the arena—a great rivalry for the prize of the people—the fierce and temporary effort of great intellectual gladiators. When they were exhausted, or perished, others followed, if with inferior powers, with close imitation. But no man has followed Burke. No defender of the truth has ever exhibited that fine combination of practical vigour with essential wisdom; that mastery of human topics with that diviner energy which overthrew not merely the revolutionary spirit of his day, but enables us to maintain the conflict against all its efforts to come;—like the conqueror of the Python, leaving his own image to all time, an emblem of matchless grace and grandeur, to ages when the enemy and the era alike are no more.

Edmund Burke, like most of those men who have made themselves memorable by their public services, was of humble extraction; the son of an Irish attorney. Yet, as Ireland is the land of genealogies, and every man who cares for the honours of ancestry, may indulge himself at large among the wide obscurity of the Irish lineages, Burke's biographers have gratified their zeal by searching for his origin among the De Burghs or Burgos, whose names are found in the list of Strongbow's knights in the invasion under Henry the Second. Edmund Burke justly seems to have thought little upon the subject, and contenting himself with being a son of Adam, prepared to lay the foundations of a fame independent of the Norman. He was born in Dublin, January 1, 1730, old style; of a delicate constitution, which in his boyhood he rendered still more delicate by a love of reading. Being threatened with consumption, he was removed at an early age from the air of the capital to the house of his grandfather at Castletown Roche, a village in the county of Cork, in the neighbourhood of the old castle of Kilcolman, once the residence of the poet Spenser, and seated in the centre of a district alike remarkable for traditional interest, and landscape beauty. Early associations often have a powerful effect on the mind; and it is not improbable that the rich and lovely scenery of this spot had some share in storing up those treasures of brightness and beauty, that love for solemn and lofty thoughts, which characterised in subsequent life the spirit of this extraordinary man.

From wandering among the hills and streams of this romantic country, of which the acknowledged picture still lives in the "Fairy Queen," Burke was transferred in his twelfth year to a school, kept by an intelligent Quaker at Ballytore, between twenty and thirty miles from Dublin. The opinion then formed of him was not unlike that which we might conceive from his later career. He was said to be fond of acquiring great diversity of knowledge, to have evinced a remarkable quickness of apprehension, and delighted in the display of memory. He read many of the old romances of chivalry, and much history and poetry. His habits were almost solitary, but he was gentle, good-natured, and willing to assist and oblige. In a debate, in 1780, after the riots, Burke adverted to his education under the roof of the quaker, Abraham Shackleton. "I have been educated," said he, "as a Protestant of the Church of England, by a *dissenter*, who was an honour to his sect, though that sect was considered one of the purest. Under his eye I have read the Bible, morning, noon, and night, and have ever since been the happier and better man for such reading. I afterwards turned my attention to the reading of all the theological publications on all sides, which were written with such wonderful ability in the last and present centuries. But, finding at length that such studies tended to confound and bewilder rather than enlighten, I dropped them, embracing and holding fast a firm faith in the Church of England."

Burke was sent to the Dublin University in 1743.

There he acquired no particular distinction. In his third year he became "a scholar of the house," an honour then obtained without much difficulty, after an examination in the classical course of the College; and probably also one of the premiums at the general examinations of the students. On the whole, he appears to have been either indolent, or adverse to the course of reading pursued in the Irish University. Goldsmith speaks of him as an idler; which may have been true, in the sense of a taste for desultory reading. Leland, then one of the tutors, always admitted that he displayed cleverness, but, "from his retired habits, was unlikely to solicit public distinction!" The evident fact, on all authorities, is; that while in College, he was a literary lounger, satisfied with going through the routine of the required exercises, but enjoying himself only over novels and newspapers, plays and travels, and the general miscellaneous publications of the day; a style of reading which nothing but the painful exertions of many an after year, even with the most powerful faculties, can retrieve; but which utterly confuses and dilapidates inferior talents, generates all the trifling and much of the vice of society, and fills the professions with loungers for life. Let no man sanction his disregard of the efforts enjoined on him by his University, under the example of Burke; unless he can atone for his folly by the mind of Burke. And let no man look with negligence on the prospects opened out to manly and well-directed exertion in those noble Institutions, unless he is prepared to begin

life anew when he has passed their walls; to turn that career into a lottery which might have been a certainty; and to encounter that long period of toil and defeated hope, which must intervene before he can break through the barriers of professional success, and pioneer his way through the rugged ascents and desolate bleaknesses that lie before even the most gifted and gallant adventurer.

Some slight records of Burke's literary predilections, at this period, remain. Shakspeare, Addison, Le Sage, Smollett, and Fielding, were his frequent perusal, as they were that of every man of his time. He praised Demosthenes as "the first of orators," declared Plutarch to be the "pleasantest reading in the whole range of Memoirs," preferred the Greek historians to the Latin, and was attracted by Horace, and enamoured of Virgil. So far there was nothing singular in his tastes. He thought as all the world has thought, for these two thousand years. But he also preferred Euripides, in all his tameness, to the simple vigour of Sophocles; professed his admiration of Lucretius, desultory and didactic as he is; and even ventured to speak of the Æneid, in all its dreary languor, perhaps the most inanimate poem that ever effused itself from the pen of a real poet, as "superior to the Iliad," of all the works of poetry, the most various, vigorous, and natural,—the model of living description, noble sentiment, and mingled strength and splendour of character. On those points he might assert his full claim to singularity. But those were the opinions of a boy, proud

and pleased with the first perception of deciding for himself, the first unfettered excursion into the wilderness of criticism. He afterwards grew wiser, as he grew calm.

But even in his immature age, he had largely formed the taste for which he was subsequently so distinguished. Milton's richness of language, boundless learning, and scriptural grandeur of conception, were the first and last themes of his applause. Young, from whose epigrammatic labour of expression, and clouded though daring fancy, modern taste shrinks, was a favourite in Burke's day; and Burke followed the public opinion, and satisfied himself that he was cultivating his mind by committing a large portion of the dreamy wanderings of the Night Thoughts to memory. He also wrote some translations of the Latin poets, and some original verses, which exhibiting his command of rhyme, exhibit nothing more.

Burke's profession was naturally marked out by that of his father. In Ireland, where no man is contented with his own rank, the son of a thriving attorney is universally designed for the bar. Burke put his name on the list of the future dispensers of justice in that country of lawyers. But, by the custom of the time, he also entered himself of the Middle Temple; a measure now unnecessary for the call to the Irish bar, but still generally adopted, from its advantages in acquainting the student with the habits of the English bar, and in allowing the advocate to transfer himself to English practice whenever circumstances may in-

duce him to leave the Irish Courts for Westminster Hall. Burke arrived in London in 1750. It is remarkable, that he had already, in some degree, formed the political views which characterised the most eminent period of his life; thus the features of his mind, like those of the countenance, in age, returned only to their first expression, and shewed that his politics were his nature. While but a student in the University, he had been roused, by his indignation at fictitious patriotism, to write a pamphlet against Brooke, the author of that much-praised, but infinitely childish romance, the Fool of Quality, who aspired to the name of a popular champion, on the credit of having composed an insolent and absurd tragedy. His second tribute to good order was a letter to Dr Lucas, a man who bustled himself into importance with the mob of the Irish metropolis; and after a life of clamour, faction, and persevering folly; of the demand of rights that were worth nothing, and the complaint of wrongs that existed only in his own brain; died in the odour of rabble sanctity, leaving his debts and his family as his bequest to popular benefaction.

The observant spirit, and philosophical turn of Burke's early mind, are evinced in a correspondence which he held with an Irish friend. He remarks, on his passage to the metropolis—"The prospects could not fail to attract the attention of the most indifferent; country seats sprinkled round me on every side, some in the modern taste, some in the style of old De Coverley Hall, all smiling on the neat but humble cottage;

every village as neat and compact as a bee-hive, resounding with the busy hum of industry; and inns like palaces."

He then sketches the mighty City, intelligently, yet with the ambitious and antithetical touch of clever inexperience—" the buildings are very fine; it may be called the Pink of Vice ; but its hospitals and charitable institutions, whose turrets pierce the skies, like so many *electrical conductors*, avert the wrath of Heaven. Its inhabitants may be divided into two classes, the undoers and the undone! An Englishman is cold and distant at first; he is cautious even in forming an acquaintance: he must know you well before he enters into friendship with you; but if he does, he is not the first to dissolve the sacred bond; in short, a real Englishman is one who performs more than he promises; in company, he is rather silent; extremely prudent in his expressions, even in politics, his favourite topic. The women are not quite so reserved, they consult their glasses to the best advantage, and as nature is very liberal in her gifts to their persons, and even to their minds, it is not easy for a young man to escape their glances, or to shut his ears to their softly flowing accents.

" As to the state of learning in this city, you know I have not been long enough in it to form a proper judgment of the subject. I don't think, however, there is as much respect paid to a man of letters on this side of the water, as you imagine. I don't find that genius, the 'rath primrose, that forsaken dies,' is patronised

by any of the nobility. So that writers of the first talents are left to the capricious patronage of the public."

All this is like the letter of any other lively observer. But the passage which follows, fantastic as it is, is the property of Burke. "Notwithstanding discouragement, literature is cultivated in a high degree—Poetry raises her enchanting voice to heaven—History arrests the wings of time in his flight to the gulf of oblivion—Philosophy, the queen of arts, and the daughter of Heaven, is daily extending her intellectual empire—Fancy sports on airy wing, like a meteor on the bosom of a summer cloud—and even Metaphysics spins her cobwebs and catches *some flies.*" His judgment of that great scene, in which he was so early, and so long to be, distinguished, is curious. "The House of Commons not unfrequently exhibits explosions of eloquence, that rise superior to those of Greece and Rome, even in their proudest days. Yet, after all, a man will make more by the figures of arithmetic than the figures of rhetoric, unless he can get into the trade wind, and then he may sail secure over the Pactolean sands."

He then touches on the stage; which, like every worshipper of the traditional excellence of the drama, he concludes to have fallen off utterly from its original merits; a complaint renewed in every succeeding age, and probably with much the same forgetfulness of the true state of the former. We are to remember, too, that Burke's lamentation was in the days of Garrick,

Barry, Mrs Yates, and a whole galaxy of first-rate performers; sustained by the activity, if not the genius, of such dramatists as Murphy, the elder Colman, Farquhar, and a long list of ingenious men, who kept the theatres in continued exertion, and whose labours, in not a few instances, still survive for the pleasure and interest of posterity. "As for the stage, it is sunk, in my opinion, to the lowest degree; I mean with regard to the trash that is exhibited on it. But I don't attribute this to the taste of the audience, for when Shakspeare warbles his native wood-notes, the boxes, pit, and gallery are crowded, and the gods are true to every word, if properly winged to the heart." The whole letter is a striking picture of his feelings, on the subjects most impressive to a young and susceptible mind. "Soon after my arrival in town, I visited Westminster Abbey. The moment I entered, I felt a kind of awe pervade my mind, which I cannot describe; the very silence seemed sacred. * * * Some would imagine that all those monuments were so many monuments of folly. I don't think so. What useful lessons of morality and sound philosophy do they not exhibit! When the high-born beauty surveys her face in the polished Parian, though dumb the marble, yet it tells her that it was placed to guard the remains of as fine a form, and as fair a face as her own. They shew, besides, how anxious we are to extend our loves and friendships beyond the grave, and to snatch as much as we can from oblivion, such is our natural love of immortality. But it is here that letters obtain their

noblest triumph; it is here that the swarthy daughters of Cadmus may hang their trophies on high. For when all the pride of the chisel, and the pomp of heraldry, yield to the silent touches of time, a single line, a half-worn out inscription, remain faithful to their trust. Blest be the man who first introduced these strangers into our islands, and may they never want protection or merit. I have not the least doubt, that the finest poem in the English language, I mean Milton's Il Penseroso, was composed in the long resounding aisle of a mouldering cloister or ivyed abbey. Yet, after all, do you know that I would rather sleep in the southern corner of a little country churchyard, than in the tomb of the Capulets? I should like, however, that my dust should mingle with kindred dust. The good old expression, 'family burying-ground,' has something pleasing in it, at least to me."

At this period he appears to have spent some time in rambling through England, for his recovery from a tendency to consumption; and to have lingered away the rest of his hours in desultory reading. He thus passed, or perhaps wasted, the years from 1750 to 1753. But such a mind must have had many misgivings in such a course, and he was at length stimulated to effort, by the vacancy of the Professorship of logic in Glasgow. The founder, or the earliest ornament, of the metaphysical school of Scotland, was an Irishman, Francis Hutcheson. This circumstance might have appeared to Burke as offering some encouragement to an attempt, whose immediate motives,

whether want of money, or want of occupation, must now be sought for in vain. The attempt itself has been disputed; but it is fully established by evidence, that in 1752, or 1753, he was a candidate for the chair of Logic in Glasgow; fortunately for his own renown, and the reverse for that of the electors and the college, he was an unsuccessful one. His triumphant rival was a name, whose laurels seem to have been limited to Glasgow, a Mr James Clow.

He had already given up the bar; whether through ill health, disinclination to the severe restrictions of its first steps, or the miscellaneous style of life and study which had become favourite and familiar with him. He supped and talked at the Grecian Coffee-house, then the evening resource of all the clever idlers of the Inns of Court. He was asked to dinner by Garrick, then delighting all the world, and whose civilities must have been highly flattering to an obscure Irish student. He made an occasional trial of his powers in old Macklin's Debating Society; and in the intervals of his leisure he is said to have employed himself in joining the general war of pamphlets against the Newcastle Administration.

But this rambling life must have been insufficient for the vigour of Burke's mind; it could scarcely have received much approbation from his judgment. The idea of shifting the scene altogether at length occurred to him; and the prospect of an appointment in America, seems to have engrossed him for a while. But his father's dislike to the idea of his looking for

fortune in lands so remote from Ireland, checked this cherished object; and Burke, in a letter which begins with "Honoured sir," and expresses with his usual grace the feelings of a gentle and dutiful spirit, gave up the design.

He still lingered two years longer; unknown, but not idle; for at the end of three years, in 1756, he published his "Vindication of Natural Society," and his celebrated "Treatise on the Sublime and Beautiful." The "Vindication" deserves praise for its authorship, panegyric for its intention. Bolingbroke had given from youth to age, the unhappy example of genius rendered useless, rank degraded, and opportunities thrown away. Gifted with powers which might have raised, or sustained, the fortunes of empire, his youth was distinguished only by systematic vice, his manhood by unprincipled ambition, and his age by callous infidelity. His life is yet to be written; and it would form an unrivalled lesson to those who solicit worldly distinction by giving popularity to crime. It would show the profligate statesman defeated in all his objects, and the still more profligate champion of unbelief alike stung by the censures and the neglect of wiser mankind. Burke's would have been the pen to have done justice to such a subject. We should have seen his fine sagacity detecting the courtly insidiousness, the smiling hostility, and the inveterate malice of the enemy alike of government and religion. His heart would have taught him to brand the sullen rage of the infidel, his loyalty to expose the restless disaffection of the rebel,

and his sense of virtue to scourge the impurity of the man of the passions. Burke's singular knowledge of past public transactions, and his personal experience of the life of statesmen, would have given the force of maxims to his conclusions ; and in the punishment of this showy impostor, we should have had the most eloquent, majestic, and instructive of all lessons to the rising mind of nations.

The " Vindication" was an attack, less on Bolingbroke's Jacobite politics, than on his irreligion. A gross and pernicious scorn of all the truths which man should hold sacred, had been the fashion of the age. It had been generated among the misty metaphysics of Germany, and rapidly swelled to its full growth in the public and personal licentiousness of the court of France. From France, England, disdaining to borrow the meanest implement for the meanest uses of life, had stooped to borrow the favourite notions of party in the State, and in the Church. Bolingbroke, exiled for his political intrigues, filled up the dreariness of his solitude by copying French infidelity ; and paid his debt of gratitude to England by preparing the poisons of Berlin and Paris for the lips of his countrymen. It was to the honour of Burke, that, in his youth, and in the midst of a general delusion of all who constituted the leaders of public taste, he should sacredly discern where the truth lay, and manfully came forth armed in its cause. His process was unanswerable. Nominally adopting the tenets of Bolingbroke, he pushed them on to practical absurdity. Applying to society

the modes of argument which the infidel had applied to religion, he showed that they justified absurdities against which common sense revolts, and crimes against which the common safety arms itself; that the plea which might serve to overthrow Christianity, would be equally forcible against the existence of order; and that the perfection of the infidel system would reason mankind into the uselessness of a Monarchy, as rapidly as into the burden of a Revelation.

In a passage, which seems to come glowing from the pen of Bolingbroke in his hour of triumph, his young antagonist thus happily at once seizes on the sounding amplification of his style, and ridicules the philosophical folly of his argument:

"In looking over any state, to form a judgment on it, it presents itself in two lights, the external and the internal. The first, that relation which it bears in point of enmity or friendship to other states. The second, that relation which its component parts, the governors and the governed, bear to each other. * * * * The glaring side of all national history is enmity. The only actions on which we have seen, and always will see all of them intent, are such as tend to the destruction of one another. 'War,' says Machiavel, 'ought to be the only study of a prince;' and by a prince he means every sort of state, however constituted. 'He ought,' says this great political doctor, 'to consider peace only as a breathing-time, which gives him leisure to contrive, and furnishes ability to execute military plans.' A meditation on the conduct of political

societies made old Hobbes imagine that war was the state of nature; and truly, if a man judged of the individuals of our race by their conduct when united and packed into nations and kingdoms, he might imagine that every sort of virtue was foreign and unnatural to the mind of man.

"The first accounts which we have of mankind are but so many accounts of their butcheries. All empires have been cemented in blood; and in these early ages, when the race of mankind began first to form themselves into parties and combinations, the first effects of the combination, and indeed the end for which it seems purposely formed and best calculated, was their mutual destruction. All ancient history is dark and uncertain. One thing, however, is clear: There were conquerors and conquests in those days, and consequently all that devastation by which they are formed, and all that oppression by which they are maintained. We know little of Sesostris, but that he led out of Egypt an army of above 700,000 men; that he overran the Mediterranean coast as far as Colchis; that in some places he met but little resistance, and of course shed not a great deal of blood, but that he found in others a people who knew the value of their liberties, and sold them dear. Whoever considers the army which this conqueror headed, the space he traversed, and the opposition he frequently met, with the natural accidents of sickness, and the dearth and badness of provision to which he must have been subject in the variety of climates and countries his march lay through

—if he knows any thing, he must know that even the conqueror's army must have suffered greatly. It will be far from excess to suppose that one-half was lost in the expedition. If this was the state of the victorious the vanquished must have had a much heavier loss, as the greatest slaughter is always in the flight; and great carnage did in those times and countries ever attend the first rage of conquest. It will therefore be very reasonable to allow on their account as much as, added to the losses of the conquerors, may amount to a million of deaths. And then we shall see this conqueror, the oldest whom we have on record, opening the scene by the destruction of at least one million of his species, unprovoked but by his ambition, without any motives but pride, cruelty, and madness, and without any benefit to himself, (for Justin expressly tell us he did not maintain his conquest,) but solely to make so many people in so distant countries feel experimentally how severe a scourge Providence intends for the human race, when it gives one man the power over many, and arms his naturally impotent and feeble rage with the hands of millions, who know no common principle of action, but a blind obedience to the passions of their ruler."

Thus pursuing his way through ancient history, and still designating it as one common display of misery and massacre; the whole resulting from the facts that society exists, and that it has rulers at its head; he comes to the scene which Europe exhibited on the fall of the great tyrant dynasty of Rome. "There have

been periods when no less than universal destruction to the race of mankind seems to have been threatened. Such was that, when the Goths, the Vandals, and the Huns, poured into Gaul, Italy, Spain, Greece, and Africa, carrying destruction with them as they advanced, and leaving horrid deserts everywhere behind them. 'Vastum ubique silentium, secreti colles, fumantia procul tecta, nemo exploratoribus obvius,' is what Tacitus calls 'facies victoriæ.' It was always so; but here it was emphatically so. From the north proceeded the swarms of Goths, Vandals, Huns, Ostrogoths, who ran towards the south into Africa itself, which suffered as all to the north had done. About this time, another torrent of barbarians, animated by the same fury, and encouraged by the same success, poured out of the south, and ravaged all to the north-east and west, to the remotest parts of Persia on one hand, and to the banks of the Loire on the other, destroying all the proud and curious monuments of human art, that not even the memory of the former inhabitants might survive. * * * * I shall only, in one word, mention the horrid effects of bigotry and avarice in the conquest of Spanish America; a conquest, on a low estimation, effected by the murder of ten millions of the species. * * * * I need not enlarge on the torrents of silent and inglorious blood which have glutted the thirsty sands of Afric, or discoloured the polar snow, or fed the savage forests of America for so many ages of continual war. * * * * I go upon a naked and moderate calculation, just enough,

without a pedantical exactness, to give your lordship some feeling of the effects of political society. I charge the whole of those effects upon *political society*. The numbers I particularized amount to about thirty-six millions. * * * * In a state of nature, it had been impossible to find a number of men sufficient for such slaughters, agreed in the same bloody purpose. Society and politics, which have given us such destructive views, have given us also the means of satisfying them. * * * * How far mere nature would have carried us, we may judge by the example of those animals which still follow her laws, and even of those to which she has given dispositions more fierce, and arms more terrible than any ever she intended we should use. It is an incontestible truth, that there is more havoc made in one year by men of men, than has been made by all the lions, tigers, panthers, ounces, leopards, hyænas, rhinoceroses, elephants, bears, and wolves upon their several species, since the beginning of the world, though those agree ill enough with each other, and have a much greater proportion of rage and fury in their composition than we have. But with respect to you, ye legislators, ye civilizers of mankind, ye Orpheuses, Minoses, Solons, Theseuses, Lycurguses, Numas, your regulations have done more mischief in cold blood, than all the rage of the fiercest animals in their greatest terrors or furies has ever done, or ever could do."

He then, from a long and detailed examination of the chief provisions and orders of society, draws the

conclusion; that man is a loser by association with his kind, by government, by jurisprudence, by commerce, by every shape and step of civilisation! Of course, this conclusion revolts common sense; and the wildest declaimer against religion will protest against thus sending man back to the forest, and stripping him of all the advantages of society, on account of the disadvantages. He will protest against arguing from the abuse of society in the rule of a certain number of violent men, to its vast, general, and beneficial uses to the infinite multitude. But the same protest is as directly applicable to the rejection of religion on account of the casual evils connected with its progress, the religious wars fomented by human passions, the corrupt practices of venal priests, the tyranny of jealous persecutors, the guilty artifice, or the blinding superstition. If the essential good is to be rejected for the sake of the accidental evil; civilisation must be cast away, as well as religion. But if the mighty stock of human good which religion bequeathes to mankind, the immeasurable consolations, the high motives, the pure guidance, the noble and perpetual stimulants reaching through all the depths of the human race, reaching too through them all undebased by human guilt, and maintaining the connexion of man in all his grades with Deity, are to weigh heavier in the balance than the mere human abuses of religion; then let us acknowledge that the infidel is not simply weak, but criminal, that he shuts his eyes against light for the love of dark-

ness, and that he is convicted of folly by all that remains to him of reason.

The concluding fragment of the essay is striking, as an evidence of the early period at which Burke had matured his pen. The style is no longer the fantastic and figurative declamation of Bolingbroke; it is Burke, as he stood before the world in the latest days of his triumph over the atheistic and revolutionary impulses of Europe; strong, yet dignified; energetic, yet clothed in the garb of that philosophic melancholy, which afterwards impressed his practical wisdom so powerfully upon the general heart.

He speaks in the person of Bolingbroke to a friend. "You are but just entering into the world. I am going out of it. I have played long enough to be heartily sick of the drama. Whether I have acted my part in it well or ill, posterity will judge with more candour than I, or than the present age, with our present passions, can possibly pretend to. For my part, I quit it without a sigh, and submit to the sovereign order without murmuring. The nearer we approach to the goal of life, the better we begin to understand the true value of our existence, and the real weight of our opinions. We set out, much in love with both, but we leave much behind us as we advance. But the passions which press our opinions are withdrawn, one after another, and the cool light of reason, at the setting of our life, shows us what a false splendour played upon those objects of our more sanguine seasons."

This tract is remarkable for its declaration of opi-

nions on the right side, when it was the pride of every man who pretended to literature, to stand on the wrong. But it is scarcely less remarkable, as actually forming the model of much of that revolutionary writing, which so recklessly laboured to inflame the popular passions, on the first burst of the French insurgency. Burke, in his virtuous ridicule, had involuntarily prepared an armoury for Paine in his profligate seriousness. The contemptuous flights of the great orator had pointed out the way for the Jacobin to ascend to the assault of all that we were accustomed to reverence and value. The burlesque charges of feeble government, misjudging law, ministerial weaknesses, and national prejudices, were eagerly adopted by the champions of overthrow, as irrefragable arguments against the altar and the throne; and Burke must have seen with surprise, or increased scorn, the arrows which he had shot out in sport, and for the mere trial of his boyish strength, gravely gathered up, and fitted to the Jacobin string, to be used against the noblest and most essential institutions of the empire.

The essay attracted considerable notice. Chesterfield and Warburton were said to have regarded it for a while as an authentic work of the infidel lord. The opinion prevailed so far; that Mallet, who, as the residuary legatee of his blasphemies, thought himself the legitimate defender of his fame, volunteered a public disclaimer on the subject; and the critics were thenceforth left to wonder on whose shoulders the mantle of the noble personage had fallen. Still Burke

was unheard of; but his second performance was destined to do justice to his ability. In the same year was published the Treatise on the Sublime and Beautiful. No work of its period so suddenly sprang into popularity. The purity, vigour, and grace of its language, the clearness of its conceptions, and its bold soarings into the clouds of metaphysics, which, dark and confused as they had rendered all former theory, were by the flashes of Burke's fine imagination, turned into brightness and beauty, attracted universal praise. Its author was looked for among the leading veterans of literature. To the public astonishment, he was found to be an obscure student of twenty-six, utterly unknown, or known only as having attempted a canvass for a Scottish professorship, and having failed. He now began to be felt in society. The reputation of his book preceded him, and he gradually became on a footing of acquaintance, if not altogether of intimacy, with some of the more remarkable names connected with life and literature; the Earl of Bath, Markham, soon after Archbishop of York, Reynolds, Soame Jenyns, Lord Littleton, Warburton, Hume, and Johnson. This was a distinction which implied very striking merits in so young a man, unassisted by rank or opulence, and with the original sin of being an Irishman, a formidable disqualification in England fifty years ago. His treatise had been the pioneer to his storm of the sullen rampart of English formality. But, to have not only climbed there, but made good his lodgment, evidently implies personal merits of no ordinary kind.

To good-humoured and cordial manners, and singular extent and variety of knowledge, he added great force and elegance of conversation. Johnson's, even the fastidious Johnson's, opinion of him, is well known, as placing him already in the very highest rank of intellectual companionship.—" Burke, sir ;" said he, " is an extraordinary man, his stream of talk is perpetual." Another of his *dicta* was, " Burke's talk is the ebullition of his mind; he does not talk from a desire of distinction, but because his mind is full."—" Burke is the *only man* whose common conversation corresponds with the general fame which he has in the world. Take up whatever topic you please, he is ready to meet you." In another instance, where some one had been paying Johnson himself the tribute due to his memorable powers, he again gave the palm to his friend. " Burke, sir, is such a man, that if you meet him for the first time, in the street, where you were stopped by a drove of oxen, and you and he stepped aside for shelter but for five minutes, he'd talk to you in such a manner, that when you parted, you would say,—that *is* an extraordinary man. Now, Sir, you may be long enough with me, without finding any thing extraordinary."

A portion of this fortunate quality must be attributed to his fondness for general study, and to the vigorous memory by which he retained all that he had acquired. But a much larger portion must be due to that salient and glowing power of thought, that vivid mental seizure, by which all his knowledge became a

member of his mind; that elective attraction for all that was original, brilliant, and intellectual, by which every new acquisition resolved itself into an increase, not of his intellectual burden, but of the essential activity and strength of his faculties. He had a great assimilating mind.

Johnson's often-recorded expression, "that no man of sense would meet Mr Burke by accident under a gateway, to avoid a shower, without being convinced that he was the first man in England," once found a direct and amusing illustration in the testimony of an utter stranger. Burke, in passing through Litchfield, had gone with a friend to look at the cathedral, while the horses were changing. One of the clergy, seeing two gentlemen somewhat at a loss in this noble building, politely volunteered as their cicerone. The conversation flowed, and he was speedily struck with surprise at the knowledge of one of the travellers. In his subsequent account of the adventure to some friends, who met him on his return, "I have been conversing," said he, "for this half hour, with a man of the most extraordinary powers of mind, and extent of information, which it has ever been my fortune to meet, and I am now going to the inn to ascertain, if possible, who the wonder is." The traveller had completely overlaid the cicerone, even in his local knowledge. On every topic which came before them, whether the architecture, history, remains, income, or learning of the cathedral, or persecutions, lives, and achievements of its ancient chapter, he had been boundless in

anecdote and illustration. The clergyman's surprise was fully accounted for, by being told at the inn that this singular companion was "Mr Burke," and the general regret of all to whom he mentioned the circumstance, was, that the name had not been known in time for them to have taken advantage of so high a gratification.

But, for three years more, this memorable man was confined to the struggles of private life. He was still actively, though obscurely, employed in writing or editing a "History of the European Settlements in America," in seven solid volumes, which obtained but slight public notice; in laying the foundations of a History of England, which, however, never reached beyond a few sheets; and in establishing, in 1758, in conjunction with Dodsley, the Annual Register. But in this work, the genius of the author wears a disguise. We look in vain for the fire and fancy, which seemed to be essentials of his authorship. And one of the most remarkable features of the whole performance, is the strong self-denial with which the philosopher and the orator had already learned to tame down the ardour of his mind. But the work was judicious and manly: it came forth too at a time when the public required something higher than a chronicle of the passing day; and, like all works which fill up a chasm in public curiosity, it succeeded to a remarkable extent. Five or six editions of the earlier volumes were rapidly received. Still, income from such sources must be precarious. He had now married, had a son; yet he had hitherto made no advance in an actual provision for

life; and a few years more of the natural toils which beset a man left to his own exertions for the support of a family, would probably have driven him to America, his old and favourite speculation against the frowns of fortune in Europe. At length the life for which he was made, the stirring and elevated interests of political and parliamentary distinction, appeared to open before him. He owed this change to an Irishman, the Earl of Charlemont.

Ireland still remembers the name of that estimable person with gratitude. A narrow fortune, and reluctant public abilities, did not prevent him from being a great public benefactor. He was the encourager of every plan for national advantage, the patron of literature, the head of the chief literary institution of Ireland, and of every other, tending to promote the good of the country. Though living much on the Continent, and in England, in early life, and long associated with all that was eminent in rank and talents in Great Britain, he generously and honestly fixed his residence on his native soil, turbulent as it was, remote from all the scenes congenial to his habits, and perplexed with furious party. For this determination, he seems to have had no other ground than a sense of duty. And he had his reward. No man in Ireland was ever reverenced with such unequivocal public honour. In all the warfare of party, no shaft ever struck his pure and lofty crest. Old connexions, and the custom of the time, which made every man of independent fortune enter public life on the side

of opposition, designated him a Whig. But no man less bowed to partisanship, no man more clearly washed the stains of faction from his hands, no man was further from the insanity of revolution. With gentle, but manly firmness, he repelled popularity; from the moment when it demanded his principles as its purchase. With generous, but indignant scorn, he raised up his voice equally against the insidious zeal which would substitute an affected love of country for patriotism; and the insurrectionary rage which would cast off the mild dominion of England, for the licence of democracy at home. He finally experienced the fate of all men of honour thrown into the midst of faction. His directness was a tacit reproach to its obliquity; as his simple honour was felt to be a libel on its ostentatious hypocrisy. He had been elected by public acclamation, to the command of the Irish Volunteers, a self-raised army of 100,000 men. He had conducted this powerful and perilous force through an anxious time, without collision with the government, or with the people. But, when French principles began to infest its ranks, he remonstrated; the remonstrance was retorted in a threat of the loss of his popularity; he embraced the alternative of a man of honour, and resigned. But the resignation was fatal to his threateners. When he laid the staff out of his hands, he laid down with it the credit of the Volunteers. They lost the national confidence from that moment. Rude and violent agitators first usurped the power, then divided it, and then quarrelled for the division. The glaring evil

of the bayonet drawn for political objects, startled the common sense of the country, and drove it to take refuge with the minister. The National army, which had been raised amid the shouts of the nation, was now cashiered by its universal outcry. The agitators went down among the common wreck; and, in the universal swell and uproar of the popular mind, the fame and virtues of the venerable commander of the Volunteers, alone floated undiminished to the shore.

But, if for one quality alone, the name of this nobleman ought to be held in memory. Perhaps no other public individual of his day extended such prompt and honourable protection to men of ability, in their advancement in the various ways of life. He had two boroughs at his command in the Irish House of Commons, and in all the venality which so daringly distinguished partisanship in that House, no one ever heard of the sale of the boroughs of Lord Charlemont. He applied his influence to the high-minded purpose of introducing men of talents into the Legislature.

An accidental intercourse with Burke, chiefly in consequence of the character which he derived from the treatise on the Sublime and Beautiful; induced this nobleman to serve his interests, by a connexion with the Secretary for Ireland, so well known by the name of single-speech Hamilton.

Hamilton's character is a problem to this hour. A single effort of eloquence had placed him among the hopes of the British senate. He never repeated it. Its reputation, and the friendship of Lord Halifax,

then President of the Board of Trade, made him a member of the Board in 1756. But Hamilton still continued silent. In four years after, he was made Secretary for Ireland, on the appointment of his noble friend as Lord Lieutenant. In the Irish House, the necessities of his situation, as Prime Minister of the Viceroyalty, overcame his nervousness, and he spoke, on several occasions, with effect. But, on his return to the English Parliament, his powers were again shut up; and, by a strange pusillanimity, a tenderness of oratorical repute, unworthy of the member of an English public assembly; during the remainder of his life, his voice was never heard. Yet, probably no man led a more anxious and self-condemning life. During this period, public distinction, and distinction peculiarly by eloquence, seems to have never left his thoughts. He compiled, he wrote, he made commonplaces of rhetoric, he was perpetually preparing for the grand explosion, to which he was never to lay the train. He saw, and we may well suppose with what bitter stings to his vanity, the contemporaries whose talents he had scorned, hastening on in the path which he longed yet feared to tread, and snatching the laurels that had once hung down, soliciting his hand. He saw a new generation start up while he pondered, enter upon contests whose magnitude rendered all the past trivial, and display powers which threw the mere rhetorician hopelessly into the shade. Still he continued criticising, preparing for the great effort that was never to be made, and calculating on

the fame which he had already suffered finally to escape; until he sank out of the remembrance of society, and dwindled into the grave. Literary history has seldom afforded an example of self-opinion so completely its own punisher; his extravagant sense of the merit of a single effort, strangled every effort to come; he was stifled in his own fame; his vanity was suicidal.

With a superior of this order, jealous, anxious, and severe, it was impossible that Burke's open temperament, and gallant dependence on his own powers, should long cordially agree. At the end of two years, he suddenly abandoned the private secretaryship; to which he declared that Hamilton, in the spirit of tyranny, had annexed degrading conditions; and in 1763 returned indignantly to England, to take the chances of beginning the world again.

CHAPTER II.

Burke appointed Private Secretary to Rockingham—Member for Wendover—His first Speech—Chatham's Ministry—Picture of Party.

But the world on which he now fixed his eyes, wore a different aspect from the humble and cheerless scene which he had so long contemplated in his closet. His Irish Secretaryship had made him feel his faculties for public life; it had thrown him on those waves which might waft him on to the most brilliant fortune. It had invigorated every muscle of his mind by the practical labours of office. Those two years, toilsome as they were in the passing, and painful in the recollection, had made him a statesman! He was thenceforward marked with the stamp of public life. We hear no more day-dreams of melancholy independence in America. From this moment, he was committed to the cause in England. He buckled on his golden armour, and entered the lists for life, within the realm which no man more contributed to adorn and to save.

Within two years after his return from Ireland, he commenced this career. In 1765, the Marquis of

Rockingham was appointed Premier. Burke was recommended to him as private secretary, and the Minister gladly availed himself of the services of a man, already so distinguished for literary excellence and official conduct. This recommendation, equally fortunate on both sides, was chiefly due to Mr Fitzherbert, a man of birth and accomplishment, who had known Burke at Johnson's celebrated club. Of Fitzherbert himself, Johnson has left the following graphic sketch:—"There was no sparkle, no brilliancy in Fitzherbert; but I never knew a man who was so generally acceptable. He made every body perfectly easy, overpowered nobody by the superiority of his talents, made no man think the worse of himself by being his rival, seemed always to listen, did not oblige you to hear much from him, and did not oppose what you said." Can conversational praise go higher?

Burke's tardy progress to the position for which nature, genius, and acquirement had formed him, is another among the thousand proofs of the fallacy, that talents make their own fortune. We see, in his instance, a man of the highest abilities, with those abilities directed to the express labours of public life, associating with a round of leading persons in life and literature, blameless in his private conduct, undegraded by pecuniary difficulty, ardent in spirit, and giving evidence of admirable qualities for the service of the state; and yet this man of talent and diligence, of vigorous learning and public virtue, left to linger in obscurity for ten of the most vivid years of his being;

admired yet overlooked, applauded yet neglected, down to the point of abandoning England, and fixing himself a reluctant exile in the wilderness. We see him rescued from this fate by the mere accident of club companionship—indebted for the whole change in his prospects, for the interposition between eminence in England and banishment in America, to the casual civility of a fashionable man of conversation.

The evident truth is, that genius is *not* the quality for public fortune. It is too fine, too fastidious, too delicate in its sense of degradation, and too proud in its estimate of its own powers, to take the bitter and humiliating chances of the world alone. It has the talon, and the wing, and the eye that drinks in the congenial splendours of the sun. But those very attributes and organs are its disqualifications for the work that must be done by the mole-eyed and subterranean routine of public life. This is the character of all long established governments. Public employ, the object of the most generous of all ambitions, is surrounded with a system of artificial obstacles, a circumvallation of dependence, through which no man can make his way by his single strength. Patronage holds the key of the portal. Family influence, personal connexion, private obligation, all must sign the passport that admits the *new* man within the lines and ramparts of this singularly jealous and keenly guarded citadel. It is only in the great general changes of the state, in the midst of mighty revolutions, and sweeping overthrows of established authority, when the old bul-

warks are broken down into fragments, and all lies naked to the step; that young vigour can despise ancient vigilance, force its way over the ruins, and be master, in its own right; indebted but to its own solitary prowess and self-dependent energy.

Yet all may be for the best. Even in the restraints laid upon the saliency of genius, there may be that larger good, which redounds in securing states from rash ambition, the besetting sin of powerful minds. It may be useful, even to the productive services of such minds, that they should undergo in part the training which belongs to delay and disappointment. The pride of talent may be wisely taught, that the feelings of a race whose mediocrity it would be ready to trample under its feet, that the common-places and formalities of the system, that even the feeble prejudices which grow up round institutions, like the moss and wild blossoms, harmless ornaments round the walls of our castles, are entitled to some share of its regard; that there are other ministers of good on earth than the impetuous stride and burning glance of genius; that the general genial harvests of social life are not to be ploughed in by the lightning, nor reaped by the whirlwind. At least, we may well rejoice in the alternative, which leaves us the quiet of society, undisturbed by revolution. To pass in peace through life is the first gift of government to nations. A few "bright particular stars" may thus be lost to the national eye,—flashing for a moment, and then sunk below the horizon for ever. But we may well be content with a sky

which gives us the light of day, and the seasons in their time; unstartled by the terrors or the wonders of those flaming phenomena which, if they descend to increase the splendour, may come to shock the harmony of the sphere.

Burke was now brought into Parliament for Wendover, in Buckinghamshire, by the influence of Lord Verney, and on July the 17th, 1765, received his appointment, as private secretary to the Minister. Yet even at this moment his fortunes were on the verge of wreck. His country operated against him; and, as in the crude conceptions of the English populace, every Irishman must be a Roman Catholic and a Jacobite; the old Duke of Newcastle, a man who through life exhibited the most curious combination of acuteness and absurdity, of address in office, and eccentricity everywhere else; instantly adopting the wisdom of the coffee-houses, hurried to the Marquis of Rockingham, to protest against his bringing this firebrand into the magazine of gunpowder which then composed the Ministry. The Marquis, a simple man, was terrified at what he had done; but a straightforward one, he had the manliness to mention the statement immediately to his new associate. Burke, probably not without some contempt for the understandings of both the noble Lords, satisfactorily shewed that it was even possible to be an Irishman and a Protestant at the same time; and referring to his career in his College, where he had obtained a scholarship,—an honour reserved expressly for Protestant students,—he at length succeeded in ap-

peasing the trepidations of the two Ministers, and establishing the facts,—that, being a Protestant gentleman by birth, he was not a Jesuit; and being educated in the Irish University for the bar, he was *not* educated at St Omers for the priesthood.

But it may be easily conceived, that this rapidity of suspicion was not palatable to the feelings of the individual. He instantly retorted upon the Premier; and declared, that to retain office was thenceforth incompatible with his honour; that suspicion so easily roused and so readily adopted, would naturally introduce reserve into their intercourse; and that conceiving a half confidence to be worse than none, he must immediately resign. The Marquis listened; but he was a native English gentleman; the dignity of conscious spirit and virtue in Burke attracted only his applause. He desired that the subject should be entirely forgotten, professed himself more than ever gratified by the manliness of his conduct, and refused to hear of his resignation. Burke, of course, gave way to this generous refusal; and proved himself worthy of the most perfect confidence, by his zeal and services during the life of his noble friend, and by many an eloquent tribute to his grave. In one of his speeches in Parliament, several years after the death of the Marquis, he thus feelingly alluded to his appointment and his patron:—

"In the year sixty-five, being in a very private station, far enough from any idea of business, and not having the honour of a seat in this House, it was my fortune, unknowing and unknown to the then Ministry,

by the intervention of a common friend, to become connected with a very noble person at the head of the Treasury department. It was indeed in a situation of little rank and of no consequence, suitable to the mediocrity of my talents and pretensions; but a situation near enough to enable me to see, as well as others, what was going on. And I did see in this noble person such sound principles, such an enlargement of mind, such clear and sagacious sense, and such unshaken fortitude; as bound me, as well as others better than me, by an inviolable attachment to him from that time forward."

The new Ministry opened the session of Parliament on the 14th of January 1766. Burke immediately shewed the value of his accession. His first speech was on American affairs, and his force, fancy, and information astonished the House. Pitt, (Lord Chatham,) whose praise was fame, followed him in the debate, and pronounced a panegyric (a most unusual condescension) on the new orator. He observed that, "the young member had proved himself a very able advocate. He had himself intended to enter at length into the details, but he had been anticipated with so much ingenuity and eloquence, that there was little left for him to say. He congratulated him on his success, and his friends on the value of the acquisition which they had made."

The stirring times through which we have passed, and the still more stirring times which seem to lie before us, throw an air of lightness over transactions

deemed momentous in the days of our fathers. The last quarter of a century shoots up between, like the pillar of the Israelites, covering all behind us with cloud, and all before us with flame. We have become accustomed in all things to a larger wielding of power, for larger consequences,—not armies but nations marching into the field—not empires but continents convulsed with overthrow, or rejoicing in the fracture of their chains,—conspiracies of kingdoms, and triumphs of the world. To us the strifes of domestic party, which excited the passions of our ancestors, have the look of child's play; and we hear the angry declamation and the prophetic menace, with something not far from scorn for the men who uttered and the men who believed. The whole has too much the air of a battle on the stage. And it must be acknowleged, that the mimic spirit of the hostility was well authenticated, in the perpetual changes of the actors, in the rapid shiftings of their costume, in their adoption, night after night, of new characters, and their being constant to nothing but a determination to be always before the public, until age or national contempt drove them from the scene.

But other things and other times are in reserve for their offspring. We already see the gathering of storms that shall try the strength of every institution of England, and mankind. A new evil has been let loose upon the earth, from a darker source than any that the timid crimes, or colourless follies, of past ages ever opened. French Jacobinism has spread through

the world. Its Babel has been cast down in France, but the fall has diminished nothing of its malignity, and nothing of its power. Its confusion of tongues there, has only inducted it into the knowledge of every language on earth; and the scattered strength of atheism and revolt has gone forth to propagate the kingdom of violence, and the idolatry of the passions, round the globe. The multitude thus in every quarter of the continent are already in the hands of Jacobinism. A spirit of fantastic and scornful innovation is abroad, marshalling every casual discontent into its levy against the laws and thrones of all nations. Every complaint of idleness, of folly, or of fortune, swells the same muster-roll of grievance, until the array shall be complete, the signal is given, and with rebellion in the van, and rapine in the rear, the whole sullen host is moved against the last refuges of government, and religion. Unless some hand mightier than that of human championship drive back the tempter to his dungeon, the ruin of all that deserves our homage is inevitable. The rise or fall of rival administrations will then cease to be a matter of moment to any living being. Be their merits what they may, they will hold their power but by the caprice of the crowd. If they are virtuous, they will but raise the scaffold for themselves; if they are vicious, they will but wash it with the blood of others. All the old generous impulses of public service, all the glowing and lofty aspirations which gave men nerve in their ascent up the steeps of honour, and made the ruggedness of the height, and the tempests on its brow,

only dearer portions of the triumph, will be at an end; there will be but one motive to power, pelf, one check to treason, fear. Successive administrations will be gathered and dissolved with the rapidity of a snow-fall. Their rise and progress will be no more noted, and no more worth being noted, than the floating of bubbles down the stream. The names of parties will be equally obnoxious, or equally forgotten. One great faction will absorb all. A hundred-headed democracy will usurp the functions of government, and turn cabinets into bureaus for registering the plunder, or tribunals for shedding the blood of the nation.

Is this an imaginary picture of the rule of the multitude? Or is it some sullen remnant dug up from the sepulchres, where the crimes of antiquity lie, fortunately, hid from the world? It is a creation of our own day, its fiery track is felt still throughout every field of Europe. In France we saw a power, which had no name in courts or cabinets, start up with the swiftness of an exhalation, and spread death through the state. England was saved. A man, of the qualities made for the high exigencies of empires, guided her councils, and appealing to the memories and the virtues of the country, rescued the constitution. Let the successors to his power be the successors to his intrepidity, and, no matter by what name they are known, we shall honour them. No voice shall call their triumph in question, or be fretfully raised in the general acclamation that follows their car to the temple of victory. But the day for the old feeble compliances is past in

every kingdom of Europe. The day for stern determination, prompt vigour, sleepless vigilance, and sacred fidelity, is come. The materials of revolt are heaped high, and fermenting in every province of the Continent. We know the conflagration that is prepared at home, we have heard the insolent menace of the hundred thousands that are to march with banners flying, from our manufacturing towns to meet the insurgent million of the capital, and concoct laws for King, ministers, and nation, under the shadow of the pike. But we should remember too, how such menaces were met before; how the throne was strengthened by the very blast that was to scatter its fragments through the world; how the temple, instead of a ruin, was turned into an asylum for the grateful virtues of the land; how the national terror was transmuted into valour and patriotism; and how, even in the rolling of the thunders that still shook the continent, England was taught to see but the agency of a power above man, armed for the preservation of her empire.

Burke's early distinction in Parliament was the result of a mind remarkably constituted for public effort; but it was also the result of that active and masculine diligence which characterised him through life. Contemplating statesmanship as holding the highest rank of intellectual pursuits, and not unnaturally excited by the lustre of its rewards, he had, from an early period, applied himself to the study of politics. As he advanced nearer its confines, he had cultivated public speaking, in some instances at debating clubs, by attending the

debates in the House of Commons, and by making himself acquainted with the principal subjects which were likely to attract discussion. Such was his diligence, that on the subject which must have been the most repulsive to his imaginative mind, the details of the commercial system, he was soon conceived to be among the best informed men in England.

This was the day of ministerial revolution—cabinets were abortions. The reign had commenced with an unpopular ministry, solely sustained by the character of the monarch. But no ministry can stand long on any strength but its own. The King, weary of upholding the Bute cabinet against its original tendency to go down, at length cast it off, and it sank, never to rise again. The Grenville ministry succeeded to its place, and its unpopularity. It was charged with the Bute principles without their palliatives, with purchasing place by the spoils of the people, with crushing the national liberties with one hand, while it was surrendering the national honour to foreigners with the other; with being a government of nepotism, favouritism, and secret patronage, a Bute ministry in masquerade. The general outcry at once demanded its overthrow, and the restoration of Pitt. The King, with a submissiveness which fully contradicts the charges of obstinacy, now offered the government to the man of the popular choice.

Burke, in a letter to the celebrated Flood, written in 1765, with admirable sagacity, narrates the course of the negotiation, and almost predicts its results.

"There is a strong probability that new men will come in, and not improbably with new ideas. There is no doubt that there is a fixed resolution to get rid of them all, (unless perhaps of Grenville,) but principally of the Duke of Bedford. So that you will have much more reason to be surprised to find the ministry standing, by the end of the next week, than to hear of their entire removal." His idea of Lord Chatham is singular; yet the event shewed his knowledge of that memorable man's character. "Nothing but an *intractable* temper in your friend Pitt can prevent a most admirable and lasting system from being put together. And this crisis will shew whether *pride* or patriotism be predominant in his character; for you may be assured, he has it now in his power to come into the service of his country upon any plan of politics he may think proper to dictate, with great and honourable terms for himself and every friend he has in the world, and with such a strength of power as will be equal to every thing but absolute despotism over the King and kingdom. A few days will shew whether he will take this part, or that of continuing on his back at Hayes *talking fustian!* excluded from all ministerial, and incapable of all Parliamentary service. For his gout is worse than ever, but his pride may disable him more than his gout."

The history amply confirmed the conjecture. The Duke of Cumberland was sent by the King to offer the premiership to Pitt. He refused it. The ministry, elated by the discovery that a substitute was not to be found, and indignant at the attempt to find one, raised

their demands upon the King. But the royal resources were not yet exhausted, and within two months the Marquis of Rockingham was placed at the head of a new cabinet. Burke's panegyric on the new premier was the exuberance of a glowing fancy, set in motion by a grateful heart. Still it was an error. The Marquis was not the leader to collect the scattered energies of party, and shape them into system. Compared with Bute, he wanted conciliation; and with Grenville, knowledge of life and business. Honest but frigid, relying on personal rank for official dignity, and for public confidence on hereditary prejudices, and forgetting the new force which had risen to disperse all such prejudices, he found himself suddenly in the rear of public opinion; saw even his own adherents starting forward before him; soon saw his whole force broken up, and, after a struggle of a few months between pride and feebleness, retreated from a field into which he ought never to have entered. Burke, on this event, probably as a matter of duty, wrote his defence, "A short History of a short Administration," a work of a few pages, and dry as it was brief.—A cold epitaph, and only the fitter for the tomb that it covered.

Pitt now came in triumphantly, with the people yoked to his chariot; with the King more reluctant, but nearly as much yoked as the people. He rapidly formed an administration, and commenced his career with an energy which justified the national election. But, with all the qualities which could raise him to the highest rank, he wanted the one important quality which

could alone keep him there. He made no allowances for the feelings, the habits, or the weaknesses, of other men. In a despotic government, perhaps, he would have been minister for life, and the admiration, if not the terror, of Europe; his clearness of political vision, the lofty mastery with which he grasped the thunders of the state, and the unerring vigour with which he launched them; his natural habits of command, his severe integrity, and his brilliant, bold, and indefatigable ambition, would have achieved all the miracles of despotic policy, and raised a small kingdom into power, or extended a large one into European supremacy. But the time for this display of unmitigated strength was past in England. Even in France, the era of the Richlieus and Mazarines was no more. Great schemes of independent government were no longer to be *created.* The minister must work with such materials as were supplied to him; and Chatham, who under a Philip the Second, would have turned the Netherlands into a desert; or stifled their hostility by throwing the weight of the world upon them; or who, under a Henry the Eighth, would have alike trampled out the Reformation, or blasted its enemies with the breath of his nostrils; was forced, in the day of George the Third, to concede and compromise, to feel the tenure of his power dependent on men whom he could scarcely stoop to acknowledge as his associates, to ballast the vessel of the State with even the fragments of former party; and having done all, to see the helm wrenched from his hand!

The difficulty of forming the new cabinet, and the disunions which so quickly gave the King the power of dissolving it, were popularly caricatured by Burke. "He (Lord Chatham) put together a piece of joinery, so crossly indented and whimsically dove-tailed, a cabinet so variously inlaid, such a piece of diversified mosaic, such a tesselated pavement without cement, here a bit of black stone and there a bit of white, patriots and courtiers, king's friends and republicans, Whigs and Tories, treacherous friends and open enemies, that it was indeed a very curious show, but utterly unsafe to touch and unsure to stand on. The colleagues whom he had assorted at the same board, stared at each other, and were obliged to ask,—Sir, your name? Sir, you have the advantage of me.—Mr Such-a-one—I beg a thousand pardons. I venture to say that it did so happen, that persons had a single office divided between them, who had never spoken to each other in their lives."

Burke, on the fall of his friends, withdrew for a few months to Ireland. He felt, with a just sense of his own reputation, that overtures would probably be made to him; and, with a sense of delicacy sufficiently remarkable in a young statesman, determining to avoid even the imputation of waiting to be purchased, he took his departure within two days of the ministerial retirement. But the changes of cabinets were now comparatively unimportant to his fortunes. He had shown what he was, and he could be forgotten no more. He had now risen to the surface, and no fall

of ministers could carry him down with them again. Once set floating on the tide of public affairs, he had within him a buoyancy that nothing could overweigh; the probability even was, that every swell and agitation of future political life would only lift him still higher, and difficulty itself render his qualities more conspicuous in the general struggle.

The impression made on his friends in London, is strikingly recorded in a letter of Johnson to Langton, in 1766. "We have the loss of Burke's company since he has been engaged in public business, in which he has gained more reputation than perhaps any man at his first appearance ever gained before. He made two speeches in the House, for repealing the Stamp Act, which were publicly commended by Mr Pitt, and have filled the town with wonder. Burke is a great man, and is expected soon to attain civil greatness." The Chatham Ministry followed the fate of its predecessors. Raised in defiance of the throne, it was naked on the side of prerogative; and while it was engaged in defending itself from the new hostility of the people, it received a blow against which it had made no preparation; the Cabinet fell under the royal hand. Pitt, too proud to capitulate, and deserted by his troops, gave up the contest at once, and left his power to be partitioned among the deserters. The Duke of Grafton was placed at the head of a Ministry formed of recreants of all parties; and one of the most ineffective and characterless cabinets that England ever saw, began its operations, with a populace inflamed to the

most extraordinary excesses, with a failing finance, and a general convulsion of the commercial system. To this mass of hostility was soon added the whole body of the colonies in uproar, hurling scorn on the mother country, denying and defying her laws, disputing her rights, and exhibiting the rebel banner waving from their shores, at once to repel the authority of England, and welcome the alliance of her enemies.

Burke was now the acknowledged leader of that part of opposition which professed the principles of the Marquis of Rockingham; Mr Grenville of that which had fallen with himself from power. But, no two men could have fewer conceptions in common. Differing in all points of policy, they were kept together only by their hostility to the weak and wavering cabinet, whose overthrow they hourly contemplated. At length a pamphlet entitled, "The present State of the Nation," written by either, Mr Grenville, or his former secretary Mr Knox, under his dictation, and containing some sarcasms on the Rockingham Ministry, brought Burke into action. He flew to the defence of a cause which he considered as his own; and in a masterly answer,* at once retorted the charges, and added to his fame all that profound thought, and animated eloquence could give. But the chief excellence of all this eminent person's works is, that they are for the general experience of mankind; they are not the artificial instruments of the hour, but instinct with a spirit of life which keeps them keen and burnished as ever,

* Observations on a late "State of the Nation."

from generation to generation. Hurrying as his conceptions rise from the fervour of the moment, and transitory as may be the circumstances of their origin, they have in them nothing transitory, nothing of the meteor; they take their place at a height above the vapours of the time, and minister illumination to every age to come. He thus powerfully speaks of the fatal facility with which public men slide into apostacy—(The Bedford party had at this period seceded from their old friends, and joined the administration)—

"It is possible to draw even from the very prosperity of ambition, examples of terror, and motives to compassion. I believe the instances are exceedingly rare, of men immediately passing over the clear, marked line of virtue, into declared vice and corruption. There are a sort of middle tints and shades between the two extremes; there is something uncertain on the confines of the two empires, which they first pass through, and which renders the change easy and imperceptible. There are even a sort of splendid impositions, so well contrived, that at the very time when the path of rectitude is quitted for ever, men seem to be advancing into some higher and nobler road of public conduct. Not that such impositions are strong enough in themselves; but that a powerful interest, often concealed from those whom it affects, works at the bottom and secures the operation. Men are thus debauched away from those legitimate connexions, which they had formed on a judgment, early perhaps, but sufficiently mature, and wholly unbiassed."

His picture of the bond slaves of party, who begin by sacrificing their principles, and then sacrifice their friends, is incomparable. "People not well grounded in the principles of public morality, find a set of maxims in office ready made for them, which they assume as naturally and inevitably as any of the insignia or instruments of the situation. A certain tone of the solid and practical is immediately acquired. Every former profession of public spirit is to be considered as a debauch of youth, or, at least, as a visionary scheme of unattainable perfection. The very idea of consistency is exploded. The convenience of the business of the day is to furnish the principle for doing it. Then the whole ministerial cant is quickly got by heart.—The prevalence of faction is to be lamented.—All opposition is to be regarded as the effect of envy and disappointed ambition.—All administrations are declared to be alike.—Flattering themselves that their power is become necessary to the support of all order and government, every thing which tends to the support of that power is sanctified, and becomes a part of the public interest.

"Growing every day more formed to affairs, and better knit in their limbs; when the occasion (now their only rule) requires it, they become capable of sacrificing those very persons to whom they had before sacrificed their original friends. It is now only in the ordinary course of business to alter an opinion, or to betray a connexion. Frequently relinquishing one set of men and adopting another, they grow into

a total indifference to human feeling, as they had before to moral obligation, until, at length, no one original impression remains on their minds, every principle is obliterated, every sentiment effaced.

"In the meantime, that power which all these changes aimed at securing, remains still as tottering and uncertain as ever. They are delivered up into the hands of those who feel neither respect for their persons, nor gratitude for their favours; who are put about them in appearance to serve, in reality to govern them; and when the signal is given, to abandon and destroy them, in order to set up some new dupe of ambition, who in his turn is to be abandoned and destroyed. Thus living in a state of continual uneasiness and ferment, softened only by the miserable consolation of giving now and then preferments to those for whom they have no value, they are unhappy in their situation, yet find it impossible to resign; until at length, soured in temper, and disappointed by the very attainment of their ends, in some angry, in some haughty, in some negligent moment, they incur the displeasure of those upon whom they have rendered their very being dependent. Then, '*perierunt tempora longi servitii*;' they are cast off with scorn, emptied of all natural character, of all intrinsic worth, of all essential dignity, and deprived of every consolation of friendship. Having rendered all retreat to old principles ridiculous, and to old regards impracticable; not being able to counterfeit pleasure, or to discharge discontent, it is more than a chance, that in the delirium of

the last stage of their distempered power, they make an insane political testament, by which they throw all their remaining weight and consequence into the scale of their declared enemies, and avowed authors of their destruction. Thus they finish their course. Had it been possible, that the whole, or even a great part of those effects on their fortunes, could have appeared to them in their first departure from the right, it is certain that they would have rejected every temptation with horror."

We shall now have to follow Burke through more various and elevated transactions; in which he was no longer the contemplatist, but the leader, of the contest. The sounds of war and anarchy were coming from America, they were reverberating from Ireland, they were preparing to be answered by a tenfold roar from France; every principle of national stability was about to be tried in its turn. Morals, Loyalty, and Government, were to undergo the fiercest ordeal known in history; and at every trial, the genius and wisdom of Burke were to be among the most conspicuous guides of the land.

CHAPTER III.

Death of George II.—Fall of Chatham—Origin of the Modern Whigs —Burke's Pamphlet—His Eloquence—Purchased Beaconsfield—Speech on Subscription to the Articles—Letters to Barry.

THE death of George II., in 1760, closed one of the most successful reigns of England. At home, the popularity of the Stuarts, first broken on the field of battle, had been extinguished on the scaffold; abroad, the continental hostilities, long threatening the overthrow of British influence, had closed in a series of encounters which gave new honours to the British military name. The capture of Calcutta by Clive, in 1757, had laid the foundations of an empire in India. The successes of Amherst and Johnson at Crown-point and Niagara, followed by the capture of Quebec, in 1759, had completed the conquest of Canada, and laid the foundations of an Empire in the West. To complete the circle of triumph, the victory of Hawke in Quiberon Bay, had destroyed the chief fleet of France, within sight of her own shore. In the midst of all those prospects of national prosperity, the old King suddenly died, at the age of seventy-seven, after a reign of thirty-three years.

The King's character had been fitted for the time. He was a firm, temperate, and sincere man; steady in the possession of his power, but unambitious of its increase; not forgetting his natural ties to the place of his birth, but honest to the obligations of his throne; attached to Hanover, but proud of England. History has passed sentence upon him, and it will not be reversed by time. "On whatever side," says a narrator of his reign, "we look upon the character of George II., we shall find ample matter for just and unsuspected praise. None of his predecessors enjoyed longer felicity. His subjects were still improving under him in commerce and arts; and his own economy set a prudent example to the nation, which, however, they did not follow. He was in temper sudden and violent; but this, though it influenced his private conduct, made no change in his public, which was generally guided by reason. He was plain and direct in his intentions, true to his word, steady in his favour and protection to his public servants, not parting with his Ministers till compelled by the force of faction." Living for the useful public qualities, rather than the splendid, the King had not the power to attract popular admiration; but it was impossible to refuse him public respect. With a clear head, and a bold heart, he conducted in the spirit of the Constitution, a constitutional empire. The great Minister of his latter day was Lord Chatham—a splendid innovation on the routine of ministry; a new political luminary, which had risen to give new energy to the

state, and throw sudden brightness over the decaying day of the Newcastle Administration. Chatham was still Premier on the accession of George III.; but his power was not of a nature to last. His personal haughtiness had grown by success, until it alienated his friends, and, finally, estranged his sovereign. A division in the Cabinet on the question of a Spanish war, shewed him that his dictatorship was at an end, and disdaining to be less than the embodied ministry, he threw up the seals. His successor, Lord Bute, was overthrown in his turn by three causes, each of which at other times would have led to fortune,—the favour of his King, the favouritism of the King's mother, and his being a Scotsman. The rapid succession of ministerial changes which, subsequently, for some years, left England with but the name of a government, had the disastrous effect of teaching the people to look with scorn upon ministerial honour. When public men trafficked alternately with the necessities of the King, and the passions of the people, the nation soon learned to consider office as a trade. All official changes are formidable tests of character; but a perpetual revolution, in the shape of the hourly rise and fall of public men; the violent professions of one day contrasted with the violent abjurations of the next; the lofty pledges followed by the abject compliances; the claims of the reigning Ministers to confidence mingled with the complaints of the fallen Ministers of treachery; rapidly turned the people into universal scoffers, erected a tribunal of state offences in every street, and sum-

moning the multitude to a jurisdiction to which their reason was incompetent, left Government at the mercy of their prejudices. The final result was, to degrade all public servants in the national eye; but the immediate was, to shake the supremacy of the great families in the administration of the country.

Chatham himself had been an intruder on the proud aristocracy of the Cabinet. But, wherever his banner waved, victory must have sat upon it; his extraordinary powers were not made to be repulsed by their frigid forms; if he could not enter by the gate, he boldly scaled the walls, and was unquestioned master of the stronghold. The King, whom he could not conciliate, he kept in awe; and the Ministry, whom he could not instruct, he held in obedience. The popular voice followed him in all his enterprises. But in his fall he completely tore down with him the veil which had hitherto covered the ministerial weakness of the great families. They struggled long to regain their ancient right to dispose of the Cabinet; but the struggle constantly became more unsuccessful; until the still greater son of that great man finished the contest, by throwing open government to men of all ranks, and making public ability the established ground of official distinction.

Yet no maxim is more incontrovertible, than that all change in the old principles of a country is hazardous. Nothing could seem more pregnant with good than this dismissal of antiquated feebleness for young vigour; nothing more suited to infuse a new wisdom into the national councils than the extinction of those obsolete

prejudices, which found their protection only in wealth, and referred for political virtue only to the rolls of the Heralds' College; nothing more congenial to the new vividness and intelligence of the empire, than that some portion of that vast harvest of ability and knowledge, which was hourly growing up with the growing influence of the middle orders, should be gathered for the public use; nothing more essential than that the hourly opening mine of public genius should be worked for the benefit of the empire.

All would have been fortunate, if the operation could have stopped here. But the almost immediate result of abolishing this patent of the great families, was to create a new and singularly dangerous influence in the State. The high aristocrats, stiff with the privileges of generations, suddenly assumed the flexibility of popular canvass; the populace in their turn hailed their new allies, and grew intoxicated in their familiarity with the Peerage. The extremes of society met. The old Court suit, with all its embroidery, was thrown off for the costume of the club; the contest for power was adjourned from the Cabinet to the streets; and the men who would have frowned down, with hereditary haughtiness, the slightest approach of the order immediately below themselves, plunged at once among the lowest grade, and bound themselves to the populace by a bond which now will never be dissolved, but in their ruin.

On this overthrow of the ancient patentees of power, Burke was induced to write his famous pamphlet,

entitled " Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents." The public clamours which assailed Lord North's Ministry, at this period (1770) threatened dangerous tumult. Burke, the friend and follower of Lord Rockingham, and involved in his exclusion, naturally imputed a large share of the clamour to the loss of his ministerial councils. The pamphlet has the uniform characteristic of his writings,— the particular topic expands into the general instruction.—Even out of the barrenness of an eulogy on Lord Rockingham, he could raise maxims for the wisdom of mankind. He thus describes the origin of the aristocratic *caste* in statesmanship:

" At the Revolution, the Crown, deprived, for the ends of the Revolution itself, of many prerogatives, was found too weak to struggle against all the difficulties which pressed on so new and unsettled a Government. The Court was obliged to delegate a part of its powers to men of such interest as could support, and of such fidelity as would adhere to, its establishment. This connexion, necessary at first, continued long after convenient, and, properly conducted, might indeed, in all situations, be an useful instrument of Government. At the same time, through the intervention of men of popular weight and character, the people possessed a security for their just proportion of importance in the State."

Having accounted for the rise of the aristocracy to power, he accounts for their fall. In this statement, his pencil is dipt in Rockingham colours: but those

colours were pure, and the outline is admirably true. He tells us, that when the Court felt itself beginning to grow strong, it began also to feel the irksomeness of dependence on Ministers, and resolved to deal with more obedient Cabinets. "The greatest weight of popular opinion and party connexion was then with the Duke of Newcastle and Mr Pitt. Neither of those held his importance by the *new tenure* of the Court; they were not, therefore, thought to be so proper as others for the services which were required by that tenure. It happened, very favourably for the *new system*, that under a forced coalition there rankled an incurable alienation and disgust between the parties which composed the administration. Mr Pitt was first attacked. Not satisfied with removing him from power, they endeavoured by various artifices to ruin his character. The other party seemed rather pleased to get rid of so oppressive a support, not perceiving that their own fall was prepared by his, and involved in it. Many other reasons prevented them from daring to look their true situation in the face. * * * * * * The power of Mr Pitt was vast and merited, but it was in a great degree personal, and therefore transient. The power of the great aristocratic families was rooted in the country. With a good deal less of popularity, they possessed a far more natural and fixed influence. Long possession of government, vast property, obligations of favours given and received, connexion of office, ties of blood, of alliance, of friendship, the name of Whig, dear to the majority of

the people, the zeal, early begun and steadily continued, to the royal family, all these together formed a body of power in the nation."

Inconsistency is the favourite topic of the libellers of Burke. But the language which he held in this pamphlet is the language which he breathed from his expiring tongue—sacred honour for established institutions, hatred of worthless change, and just respect for the natural influence of rank, birth, and property. The change was not in the writer, but in the men. The French Revolution was the boundary-line between the aristocrat of his first day and his last,—the torrent which, whoever crossed, left his former robes on the edge, and came out naked. He as powerfully asserts the superior claim of the first class of the nation to govern the State, in 1770, as he asserted it in the full fury and tempest of 1793.

"One of the principal topics," he observes, "of the *new school*, is a terror of the growth of an aristocratic power, prejudicial to the rights of the Crown, and the balance of the Constitution. It is true, that the Peers have a great influence in the kingdom, and in every part of the public concerns. While they are men of property, it is impossible to prevent it, except by such means as must prevent all property from its natural operation,—an event not easily to be compassed, while property is power; nor by any means to be wished, while the least notion exists of the method by which the spirit of liberty acts, and of the means by which it is preserved. If any particular Peers, by

their uniform, upright, constitutional conduct, by their public and their private virtues, have acquired an influence in the country, the people, on whose favour that influence depends, will never be duped into an opinion, that such greatness in a Peer is the despotism of an aristocracy, when they know and feel it to be the pledge of their own importance.

"I am no friend to aristocracy, *in the sense*, at least, in which that word is usually understood. If it were not a bad habit to moot cases on the supposed ruin of the constitution, I should be free to declare, that, if it must perish, I should rather, by far, see it resolved into any other form, than lost in that austere and insolent domination. But whatever my dislikes are, my fears are not from that quarter."

It is clear, that in this passage, the writer alludes to an aristocracy assuming the sole functions of Government,—not an English, but a Venetian aristocracy,—an oligarchy, at once shielding itself from responsibility by its numbers, and overawing the people by its dark and sullen violence. The power to which he alludes as the object of dread, is that of a faction behind the throne. It is equally clear, that even Burke's wisdom mistook the true hazard of the Constitution; that in contemplating the power of an intriguing Court, he overlooked the tyranny of an irresponsible populace; that in guarding the Constitutional tree from the southern, sickly breezes of Court patronage, he forgot the hurricane that would shatter and root it out of the ground. But even his sagacity may be forgiven for

being unable to anticipate the horrors of revolutionary rage. The depths of the rebel heart were not yet convulsed and laid open by the sense of uncontrollable power; the terrible deposits of the revolutionary volcano were not yet shaken and kindled into flame.

It is also to be remembered, that during this discussion, the question was not of Whigs or Tories, according to their later qualities. In Burke's earlier day, the Whigs were but another name for the landed interest, the great body of family and fortune of the country, claiming to be all but hereditary governors of the empire; but little connected with any inferior class, and scarcely recognising the existence of the populace; no more dreaming of an appeal to the multitude for the support of their measures, than they would have dreamt of allying them with their blood; a genuine English aristocracy. They had the disqualifications produced by time upon all things human, and they were perhaps too proud to be easily accessible to the public feelings; too fully satisfied with their ancient possession to think, that while all went well with the Peerage, the nation could suffer any serious evil; and too fond of the silk and ermine of their state to be prepared to cast them off, and grapple naked with those new public difficulties which new times were bringing on, and which demanded the whole unembarrassed muscle and activity of the man.

Still, in that class, there was once a great safeguard for both the Crown and the people; a nobleness more of mind than even of rank; an embodying of generous and stately principle, derived from an early superiority

to the motives and habits which the common exigencies of things sometimes impose on men struggling through the more obscure ways of life; a patrician dignity, which spread from the manners to the mind, and if it did not give full security against the assumption of a power beyond right, yet prevented all the meaner abuses of the functions of government, all personal and petty tyranny, all the baser tamperings with popular corruption, and all the ignoble jealousy, livid rancour, and bloodthirsty persecution, inseparable from power suddenly consigned to the hands of the multitude.

In adverting to the remedies proposed for public renovation Burke touches upon the two grand expedients, which are now received with such cheers, Triennial Parliaments, and the exclusion of all men holding office, from Parliament. His language on those heating topics, shews how maturely he had formed his earliest political impressions.

"If I wrote merely to please the popular palate, it would indeed be as little troublesome to me as to another, to extol those remedies so famous in speculation; but to which their greatest admirers have never attempted seriously to resort in practice. I confess, then, I have no sort of reliance upon either a Triennial Parliament or a Place Bill. With regard to the former, perhaps it might rather serve to counteract than to promote the ends that are promoted by it. To say nothing of the horrible disorders among the people attending frequent elections, I should be fearful of committing, every three years, the independent gen-

tlemen of the country in a contest with the Treasury. It is easy to see which of the parties would be ruined first. Whoever has taken a careful view of public proceedings, so as to ground his speculations on his experience, must have observed how prodigiously greater the power of Ministry is in the first and last Session of a Parliament, than it is in the intermediate periods, when members sit a little firm in their seats. The evil complained of, if it exists in the present state of things, would hardly be removed by a triennial Parliament; for, unless the influence of Government in elections can be *entirely taken away*, the more frequently they return, the more they will harass private independence; the more generally will men be compelled to fly to the settled, systematic influence of Government, and to the resources of a boundless civil list. Certainly something may be done, and ought to be done, towards lessening that influence in elections. * * * * * "But *nothing* can so perfectly remove the evil, as not to render such contentions, too frequently repeated, utterly ruinous, first to independence of fortune, and then to independence of spirit. With great truth, I may aver, that I never remember to have talked on this subject with any man much conversant with public business, who considered short Parliaments as a real improvement of the Constitution."

He next examines the merits of a Place Bill, a measure which unquestionably will be one of the favourite proposals, at the first convenient season, of that extravagant and angry faction, which, making its way into public influence by intrigue, will retain it by perfidy;

which flourishes the knife for national rights, and will yet perform its promise, by plunging it into the bowels of the Constitution.

" The next remedy," says he, " is a Place Bill. The same principle guides in both; I mean, that is entertained by many, of the infallibility of laws and regulations in the cure of public distempers. Without being as unreasonably doubtful, as many are unwisely confident, I will only say, that this also is a matter very well worthy of serious and mature reflection. It is not easy to foresee, what the effect would be, of disconnecting with Parliament the greater part of those who hold civil employments, and of such mighty and important bodies as the military and naval establishments. It were better, perhaps, that they should have a corrupt interest in the forms of the Constitution, than that they should *have none at all.* This is a question altogether different from the disqualification of a particular description of revenue officers from seats in Parliament, or, perhaps, of all the lower sorts of them from votes in elections. In the former case, only the few are affected; in the latter, only the inconsiderable. But a great official, a great professional, a great military and naval interest, all necessarily comprehending many people of the first weight, ability, wealth, and spirit, has been gradually formed in the kingdom. Those new interests *must* be let into a share of representation; else possibly they may be inclined to destroy those institutions of which they are not permitted to partake. * * * * *

" It is no inconsiderable part of wisdom, to know how

much of an evil ought to be tolerated; lest by attempting a degree of purity impracticable in degenerate times and manners, instead of cutting off the subsisting ill practices, new corruptions might be produced, for the concealment and security of the old. It were better, undoubtedly, that no influence at all should affect the mind of a member of Parliament. But, of all modes of influence, in my opinion, a place under the Government is the least disgraceful to the man who holds it, and by far the most safe to the country. I would not shut out that sort of influence which is open and visible, which is connected with the dignity and the service of the State; when it is not in my power to prevent the influence of contracts, of subscriptions, of direct bribery, and of those innumerable methods of clandestine corruption, which are abundantly in the hands of the Court, and which will be applied, so long as the means of corruption, and the disposition to be corrupted, have existence among us. Our Constitution stands on a nice equipoise, with steep precipices and deep waters upon all sides of it. In removing it from a dangerous leaning towards one side, there may be a risk of oversetting it on the other. Every project of a material change in a Government so complicated as ours, combined at the same time with external circumstances still more complicated, is a *matter full of difficulties*, in which a considerate man will not be too ready to decide, a prudent man too ready to undertake, or an honest man too ready to promise."

The incompetence of the Ministry had at length involved them in general quarrel,—quarrel with America,

quarrel with foreign Powers, and quarrel at home. Wilkes, the printers who published the debates in Parliament, and the Mayor and Aldermen, who were imprisoned for resisting the authority of the House of Commons, were the civil antagonists. In every conflict with them all, the Ministry were worsted. Burke took a vigorous share in those perpetual debates, and made continual progress in the public admiration. His speaking was a style totally new to the House and the nation. But two eminent orators had appeared in Parliament for a century: Bolingbroke, rich, dexterous, and fluent, the prince of rhetoricians: Chatham, condensed, pointed, and brilliant, irregular in his conceptions, and unequal in his efforts; but when he put forth his strength, striking with prodigious power,—the weight, directness, and fire of a thunderbolt. Yet, like the thunderbolt, his eloquence was generated by the storm, and fit only for the storm. Burke's larger scholarship and finer philosophy displayed an eloquence not less fluent than the one, or less vivid than the other; but still more cheering, magnificent, and fruitful of noble thoughts and generous purposes. When he spoke, he seemed to be speaking less for the triumph of his party, than for the wellbeing of the human race. All his speeches were profound wisdom administering to daily practice. The House, perpetually astonished by the opulent variety of his knowledge, by his sudden illustrations gathered from every art and science, by the living splendours which he caught from every region of human research, and reflected upon the subject before them; were yet more astonished by the

practical simplicity of the richest efforts of his imagination. The boldest impulse of its strength was never suffered to whirl him beyond the "visible diurnal sphere." His original purpose was kept steadily in view. He might luxuriate, and play his powers, in the realms of brilliant abstraction for a time; but his eye never wandered; he struck down instantly upon the point—and at once dazzled, delighted, and convinced. It had been said that, under Walpole's Ministry, the debates were worthy only of a club of Dutch burgomasters; Burke brought back the spirit, which should never have departed from an assembly of freemen. He gave the debates at once Attic elegance, and British vigour.

Other times and other men followed. Violent faction disturbed the tastes of national debate. The fierceness of civil struggle, and the terrors of a war which threatened to overwhelm the empire, at length indisposed men to oratory. Pitt and Fox became the arbiters of the House. The directness of their style was more congenial to their severe and trying time, than the lavish grandeur and poetic magnificence of Burke. But his triumph has returned. The speeches of the great Minister and his great rival have gone down with them to the tomb. Burke's have assumed only a loftier character in the estimation of all men since his death. They are now the study of every mind that thirsts to drink pure political wisdom from one of its highest human sources. Their fount has not sunk into his grave; fed by nature and genius, it will be fresh, clear, and healthful, until the last ages of the national mind.

The fall of the Rockingham Ministry had displaced Burke; and with his delicacy of taking office, under the slightest presumption of a change of principle, it, for some time, secluded him from public service. But in this interval he was neither idle nor unhappy. In general society, he was still one of the leaders of all that was intellectual. His almost boundless information, his well-regulated wit, and his fine and peculiar mastery of all that was polished, or pointed, in the English language, gave him a superiority in conversation, which was rendered still more pleasing by the uniform kindness, simplicity, and good-humour of his manners. In his domestic life he was fortunate. His wife was an estimable woman, strongly attached to him, and proud of his fame. His two brothers were amiable and intelligent men, united with him in close friendship, and whom he hoped yet to advance to fortune. He had purchased with his paternal property, and by a sum raised on mortgage, which Lord Rockingham advanced, Gregories, a house with some land, in the neighbourhood of Beaconsfield. There he *farmed*, read, and wrote. In London, from which his house was but twenty-four miles distant, he mingled with the highest circles of active life, enjoyed all the concentrated animation and ability of the accomplished and opulent; and in Parliament continually indulged his genius, and enlarged his fame by an eloquence, which, in its peculiar spirit, has never found a superior.

It has been remarked, as a characteristic of all eminent minds, that whatever pursuit they adopt, they

adopt it with peculiar vigour. Burke, at all times attached to a country life, was a farmer in the intervals of his labours as a statesman; and he gave himself up to his crops with a diligence that would have done credit to a man who had never strayed beyond the farm-yard. In one of his letters to an Irish friend, about 1771, he thus mentions his successes at the plough-tail:—"We have had the most rainy and stormy season that has been known. I have got my wheat into the ground better than some others; that is, about four-and-twenty acres. I purposed having about ten more; but, considering the season, this is tolerable." He then proceeds to a detail of his exploits in the production of bacon; enquires to what weight hogs are capable of being fed in Ireland, and anticipates victory in giving the weight of his own; discusses the market-prices of things, and explains a new project of sowing peas, which is to save a fallow, and of course make a handsome return to the projector, &c.

But he soon returned to more congenial occupations; and was seen in Parliament, standing forth the champion of common sense and the State. His love of political peace, his adherence to established order, and his prophetic fears of the change that might be wrought upon the spirit of the constitution, by rashly tampering even with its externals, were not the late prejudices of his political life, but the original principles of his moral understanding. On a petition, so early as 1772, from 250 Clergy of the Establishment, against subscription to the Articles, he resisted the opinion of nearly the whole of his friends, and spoke directly

against the point of the petition. "I can comprehend," was the substance of his speech, "how men may decline entering a church where they are to be bound by a declaration of their opinions. Well, then, let them not enter it. But, if it is important that a church should have any settled opinions at all—and who shall deny this?—it is surely important that those opinions should be distinctly declared, and not less important that the ministers and teachers of that church should be faithful transmitters of its tenets; otherwise the church may be paying an enemy, and the people may be listening to a renegade. But while the petitioners profess *to belong to the Establishment*, and *profit by it*, no hardship can be implied in requiring some common bond of agreement, such as the subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles, for the fidelity, the union, and the obedience of its members."

But even every trait which private life developed in this admirable mind, bore the same stamp of habitual value for the common sense of human nature. His principle was, a considerate respect for the customs of general life, and a persuasion that Time, their founder, was a wiser guide than Innovation, their overthrower. Burke's humanity had encumbered him with Barry, afterwards the well-known and eccentric painter. He had sent him to take the range of the Italian schools, and from 1765 to 1770 supported him nearly at his sole expense. Barry was the most impracticable of men. He possessed some vigour of conception in his art, but unfortunately prepared himself for constant

failure by a constant miscalculation of his powers. He revenged his failure by contempt for the public taste; and cheered his arrogance, on the very verge of ruin, by pronouncing that the success of his contemporaries was the result of intrigue. His vanity and stubbornness at length totally alienated from him the good offices of his profession; his determined neglect of appearances, and his intentional roughness of manner, repelled all higher patronage; and thus, gradually exiling himself from the society in which his talents might have given him a place, and abandoning the opportunities of the profession by which he was to live; he shrank into wolfish solitude. He still lingered out some bitter years; furious at being taken at his word, and suffered to relinquish the world, which he affected to despise; and furious at the professional neglect, which he professed to regard as the stamp of his superiority. Burke's generous friendship adhered to him to the last, though often exposed to slights in return; and through good report and evil report, he sheltered the remnants of his fame. Barry died at length, worn out by a perpetual struggle against the calamities which he had summoned for his own undoing. He had lived in projects, and in projects he died; dreaming of unattainable triumphs, and longing but for *another year*, to throw all living excellence into eclipse, and sit down by the side of Michael Angelo.

Burke corresponded with this unfortunate man, while he was making the tour of the Italian galleries;

and his letters are admirable models alternately of criticism and conduct.

In one of those he says, " With regard to your studies, you know, my dear Barry, my opinion. I do not choose to lecture you to death; but, to say all I can in a few words, it will not do for a man qualified like you, to be a connoisseur and a sketcher. You must be an *artist;* and this you cannot be, but by drawing with the last degree of noble correctness. Until you can *draw beauty*, with the *last degree of truth and precision*, you will not consider yourself possessed of that faculty. This power will not hinder you from passing to the ' great style' when you please, if your character should, as I imagine it will, lead you to that style in preference to the other. But no man can draw perfectly, who cannot draw *beauty*. My dear Barry, I repeat it again and again, leave off sketching. Whatever you do, *finish it.*"

He next attempts to warn this unmanageable painter, of that *idlest* of all habits; attempting every thing at once.

" At Rome, you are, I suppose, ever still so much agitated by the profusion of fine things on every side of you, that you have hardly had time to sit down to methodical and regular study. When you do, you will certainly select the *best parts* of the best things, and attach yourself to them wholly. Permit me, once more to wish you, in the beginning, at least, to contract the circle of your studies. The extent and rapidity of your mind carries you to too great a diversity of things, and to the completion of a whole before you are quite

master of the parts, in a degree equal to the dignity of your ideas. This disposition arises from a generous impatience, which is a fault almost characteristic of great genius. But it is a fault nevertheless."

He still insists with the zeal of a friend, and the feelings of a true judge of the art, upon the necessity of first acquiring perfection in drawing. Barry had, doubtless, in his vague style, talked of composing all kinds of subjects. To temper this vanity of the idler, Burke gives him the advice which would have formed the artist. "I confess, I am not much desirous of your composing many pieces, for some time at least; composition I do not value near so highly as in general. I know none who attempt, who thus do not succeed tolerably in that part. But that exquisite masterly drawing, which is the glory of the great school where you are, has fallen to the lot of very few, perhaps to none of the present age, in its highest perfection. If I were to indulge a conjecture, I should attribute all that is called greatness of style and manner of drawing to this exact knowledge of the parts of the human body, of anatomy and perspective. For, by knowing exactly and habitually, without the labour of particular and occasional thinking, what was to be done in every figure they designed, they naturally attained a freedom and spirit of outline; because they could be daring without being absurd. Whereas ignorance, if it be cautious, is poor and timid; if bold, it is only blindly presumptuous. This minute and thorough knowledge of anatomy, and practical as well as theoretical per-

spective, by which I mean to include foreshortening, is all the effect of labour and use in particular studies, and not in general compositions."

Barry, it appears, had fallen into the habit of charging the ill success of his art on the contrivances of the picture-dealers, an old, and a sufficiently childish, topic with all artists who are destined to obscurity. Burke, with his usual calmness of view, pointed out the weakness of this perpetual tirade.

"You have given a strong, and I fancy, a very faithful, picture of the dealers in taste with you. It is very right that you should know and remark their little arts; but, as fraud will intermeddle in every transaction of life, where we cannot oppose ourselves to it with effect, it is by no means our duty or our interest, to make ourselves uneasy, or to multiply enemies on account of it. In particular, you may be assured, that the traffic in antiquity, and all the enthusiasm, folly, or fraud that may be in it, never did, and never can, hurt the merit of living artists. Quite the contrary in my opinion. For I have ever observed, that whatever it be that turns the minds of men to any thing relative to the arts, even the most remotely so, brings artists more and more into credit and repute. And though now and then, the mere broker and dealer in such things runs away with a great deal of the profit, yet, in the end, ingenious men will find themselves gainers by the dispositions which are nourished and cherished in the world by such pursuits."

The advice was thrown away. Barry's ill-manners

and discontented spirit had soon brought him into collision with the artists and persons connected with the arts in Rome. Of this he complained to Burke; but seems to have intimated that his acquirements would be benefited in consequence, probably by the seclusion which he thus brought upon himself. Burke's letter is incomparable, as a manual of general advice to all who must struggle among mankind. To the fanciful or the fastidious,—to those who weakly think themselves above their circle, or bitterly conceive that the neglect of their circle is to be averted only by hostility; and more peculiarly, to all ranks of those irritable races, whose life must be a perpetual run under the fire of criticism; the motto of this fine document ought to be, "*Nocturna versate manu, versate diurna.*"

"Until very lately, I had never heard any thing of your proceedings from others; and when I did, it was much less than I had known from yourself;—that you had been upon ill terms with the artists and virtuosi in Rome, without much mention of cause or consequence. If you have improved those unfortunate quarrels to your advancement in your art, you have turned a very disagreeable circumstance to a very capital advantage. However you may have succeeded in this uncommon attempt, permit me to suggest to you, with that friendly liberty which you have always had the goodness to bear from me, that you cannot possibly always have the same success, with regard to either your fortune or your reputation. Depend upon it, that you will find the same competitions, the same

jealousies, the same arts and cabals, the same emulations of interest and fame, and the same agitations and passions here, that you have experienced in Italy. And if they have the same effect on your temper, they will just have the same effect on your interest, and, be your merit what it will, you will never be employed to paint a picture. It will be the same in London as in Rome, and the same in Paris as in London, for the world is pretty nearly alike in all its parts. Nay, though it would perhaps be a little inconvenience to me, I had a thousand times rather you should fix your residence at Rome than here, as I should not then have the mortification of seeing with my own eyes, a genius of the first rank lost to the world, himself, and his friends; as I certainly must, if you do not assume a manner of acting and thinking here, totally different from what your letters from Rome have described to me.

"That you have had just subjects of indignation always, and of anger often, I do noways doubt; who can live in the world without some trial of his patience? But believe me, my dear Barry, that the arms with which the ill dispositions of the world are to be combated, and the qualities by which it is to be reconciled to us, and we reconciled to it, are moderation, gentleness, a little indulgence to others, and a great deal of distrust of ourselves; which are not qualities of a mean spirit, as some may possibly think them; but *virtues of a great and noble kind*, and such as dignify our nature as much as they contribute to our repose

and fortune. For nothing can be so unworthy of a well-composed soul, as to pass away life in bickerings and litigations, in snarling and scuffling with every one about us. Again and again, my dear Barry, we must be at peace with our species; if not for their sakes, yet very much for our own. Think what my feelings must be, from my unfeigned regard, and from my wishes that your talents might be of use; when I see what the inevitable consequences must be, of your persevering in what has hitherto been your course, ever since I knew you; and which you will permit me to trace out for you beforehand.

"You will come here; you will observe what the artists are doing; and you will sometimes speak disapprobation in plain words, and sometimes by a no less expressive silence. By degrees you will produce some of your own works. They will be variously criticised; you will defend them; you will abuse those who have attacked you; expostulations, discussions, letters, possibly challenges, will go forward. In the meantime, gentlemen will avoid your friendship, for fear of being engaged in your quarrels. You will fall into distresses which will only aggravate your disposition for further quarrels. You will be obliged, for maintenance, to do any thing for any body—your very talents will depart, for want of hope and encouragement; and you will go out of the world, fretted, disappointed, and ruined!

"Nothing but my real regard for you, could induce me to set those considerations in this light before you.

Remember, we are born to serve and to adorn our country, and not to contend with our fellow-citizens; and that in particular, *your* business is to paint, and *not* to dispute." The prediction was true to the letter.

Life was still opening upon Burke. Every year now urged him more into public fame. He spoke on all great occasions in the House. The richness and power of his fancy was becoming constantly more effective, from his constant acquisition of facts; a consciousness of the stand which he took in national estimation, stimulated him to indefatigable industry; and, in the course of a period which generally finds the young senator still trembling on the edge of debate, Burke had passed by all his contemporaries, shorn the old leaders of their laurels, and by universal consent, taken his stand at the head of Opposition.

This maturity of his powers had arrived at a memorable time. The condition of the Empire required the highest ability in the Governors of the State, and gave the largest scope for all the attributes of political knowledge, wisdom, and patriotism. If the world shall ever become virtuous enough to deserve a developement of the actual course of Providence in the affairs of nations, a new light may be thrown on the whole aspect of history. Events remote, trivial, and obscure, may be found to have been the origin of the greatest transactions; a chain of circumstances may be traceable round the globe; and while the shortsightedness of the worldly politician deems the catastrophe complete and closed, its operation may be

but more secretly advancing, to envelope a still larger space, and explode with a more tremendous ruin.

The revolt of America has been attributed to the attempt to lay on taxes without representation. But a more remote, yet substantial, ground for the spirit of resistance, was to be found in the French war of twenty years before. At that period the colonists were first taught their faculties for the field—the advantages of natives over foreigners, in the forest skirmishes—the natural strength of the swamp, the river, and the thicket—the utter helplessness of the most disciplined army of Europe to resist the famine and inclemency of the wilderness—and the utter feebleness of the most dexterous tactics before the simple activity and enterprize of the forest hunter on his own ground. Washington had served in the British campaigns against the French masters of the chain of fortresses, extending from Quebec through the forests; and the lesson was not forgotton by him or his Virginian countrymen. It palpably rendered the population less fearful of a shock with even the mighty power of England; and the first impulse which was given to the national spirit, by the first pressure of the lightest of all national bonds, found the Americans falling back upon the memories of their successful skirmishes, and not unwilling to renew the stirring times, when the lance and the rifle were names of terror in the hands of the woodsman.

Burke's rank in the House naturally induced him to take a prominent part in the debates on America. But he had an additional source of knowledge and feeling, in

his personal connexion with the State of New York; for which he had been appointed agent in 1771. It is not improbable, that to this connexion may be ascribed some share of the extraordinary ardour with which he adopted the complaints of America. That his nature disdained corruption, is acknowledged; yet, that the advocacy of a side which embarrassed the Minister, was the established service of Opposition, is a maxim which will not be disputed by the morals of Parliament; and thus this eminent person may have been blamelessly drawn in to give his support to pretensions, which his calmer reason would have discovered to be utterly untenable.

The tea-duty, of all pretexts the most trivial for a great insurrectionary movement against a protecting and parent state, was the constant topic of Opposition. At length the question was brought to issue, by a proposal, on the 19th of April, 1774, for the final repeal of the obnoxious duty. Burke rose in reply to a vehement speech on the Ministerial side, by Wolfran Cornwall, one of the Lords of the Treasury. It is said, that a considerable portion of this reply was the work of the moment. Of course, he had too much deference for the House, and too much regard for his own rank there, to venture so important an effort altogether upon the chances of the hour. But its direct allusions to the arguments of the preceding speaker, give unequivocal proof of that ready and rapid seizure of circumstances, which forms the chief talent of a debater. This speech, too, has the distinction of being

the first that has been preserved. Its effect on the House had induced several of the Members to take notes, and from those it was subsequently given to public curiosity. It singularly abounds in strong appeals, and dexterous pungencies of language. "For nine long years," it began, "we have been lashed round and round this circle of occasional arguments, and temporary expedients. We have had them in every shape —we have looked at them in every point of view. Invention is exhausted,—reason is fatigued,—experience has given judgment, but obstinacy is not yet conquered." * * * "It is through your American trade that your East India conquests are to be prevented from crushing you with their burden. They are ponderous indeed, and they must have that great country to lean on, or they tumble on your head. The same folly has lost you the benefit at once of the West and the East. This folly has thrown open the folding-doors to contraband. It will be the means of giving the profits of the trade of your colonies to every nation but yourselves. Never did a people suffer so much from a preamble. It is a tax of sophistry—a tax of pedantry—a tax of disputation—a tax of war and rebellion—a tax for any thing but benefit to the imposers, or satisfaction to the subject." * * * "I pass by the use of the King's name in a matter of supply, that sacred and reserved right of the Commons. I conceal the ridiculous figure of Parliament, hurling its thunders at the gigantic rebellion of America, and then, five days after, prostrate at the feet of those as-

semblies which we affected to despise; begging them, by the intervention of our Ministerial sureties, to receive our submission."

From those keen and pointed sentences, he sometimes spreads into bold amplification. "Let us," he exclaims, "embrace some system or other, before we put an end to this session. Do you mean to tax America, and to draw a productive revenue from her? If you do, speak out,—name, fix this revenue,—settle its quantity,—define its objects,—provide for its collection, and then fight, when you have something to fight for. If you murder, rob; if you kill, take possession; but do not appear in the character of madmen as well as assassins, violent, vindictive, bloody and tyrannical, and all without an object."

Lord Caermarthen had remarked in the course of the debate, that "America was at least as much represented as Manchester, which had made no complaint of a want so imaginary; and that the Americans ought, as the children of England, to have exhibited somewhat more of the spirit of filial obedience." Burke's fine and forcible retort on this charge produced an extraordinary sensation in the whole House.

"The noble lord," said he, "calls the Americans our children, and such they are. But when our children ask for bread, shall we give them a stone? When they wish to assimilate to their parent, and to reflect with a true filial resemblance the beauteous countenance of British liberty, are we to turn to them only the deformed part of the British Constitution? Are we to give them our weakness for their strength, our

opprobrium for their glory, and the slough of slavery, which we are not able to work off, to serve them for their freedom ?"

Even in this speech he strikes a blow at the political metaphysics, which the later and more glorious part of his life was so vigorously employed in exposing. " Those are," said he, " the arguments of states and kingdoms. Leave the rest to the schools. But if, intemperately, unwisely, fatally, you sophisticate and poison the very source of government by urging *subtle deductions*, and consequences odious to those you govern, from the unlimited and illimitable nature of supreme sovereignty, you will teach them by these means to call that sovereignty in question. If you drive him hard, the boar will turn upon the hunters."

This speech was one of the most signal triumphs of the orator. The debate had been long and tedious, and the members had gradually thinned away to the coffee-room. When it was told, that Burke was on his legs, public expectation was excited ; but it was only when he had thoroughly entered on his subject, that the reports of his extraordinary brilliancy on that night suddenly crowded the House. From that moment, their expressions of delight were incessant. The hearers in the galleries could be scarcely restrained from bursting out into applause. At one of these sudden and powerful turns with which the speech abounded, Lord John Townshend, who had been familiar with all the former leaders of debate, exclaimed, " Good heavens, what a man is this ! Where could he have found such transcendant powers !"

CHAPTER IV.

Election for Bristol—Speech at the Hustings—Popular Delusions—Famous Speech on American Affairs—Apostrophe to Lord Bathurst—Keen Parody by Johnson.

THE dissolution of Parliament put an end to Burke's representation of Wendover. But his rank in Opposition made his presence necessary to his party in the House; and, by the Fitzwilliam interest, he was returned for Malton. But he was to ascend a higher step in popular distinctions. While he had scarcely more than made his acknowledgments to the northern electors, a deputation from Bristol was announced. It had been sent by a strong body of the merchants, to propose his nomination in their city, and bring him in free of all expense. So striking an evidence of public opinion could not be declined. He immediately took leave of Malton, and started for Bristol; where he arrived only on the sixth day of the election! There was no time to be lost; and, notwithstanding his weariness, for he had travelled forty hours without rest, he drove to the hustings. The candidates had been Lord Clare and Mr Brickdale,

the late members; with Mr Cruger, a considerable merchant. On the second day of the poll, Lord Clare had given up the contest; but Brickdale had rendered himself unacceptable to the merchants, and they determined to find a candidate at once master of the commercial interests of the empire, and possessing weight in the House. The deputation had immediately set out for London in search of Burke; from London they had followed him to Yorkshire, and they soon had the gratification of seeing him returned for their city.

The speech which he addressed to the electors on his arrival, a brief, but clear exposition of his political views, shewed at the instant how highly his friends were justified in his selection. America was now the topic upon which all discussion turned, and he, of course, alluded to it. But it is gratifying to have his explicit declaration; that he never contemplated the rash revolt, and never justified the gross denial of British right, which formed the head and front of American offending. "I have held," said he, "and ever shall maintain, to the best of my power, unimpaired and undiminished, the just, wise, and necessary constitutional superiority of Great Britain. This is necessary for America, as well as for us—I never mean to depart from it. Whatever may be lost by it, I avow it. The forfeiture even of your favour, if by such a declaration I could forfeit it, never will make me disguise my sentiments on the subject. But I have ever had a clear opinion, and have ever held a constant, correspondent conduct, that this superiority is

consistent with all the liberties which a sober and spirited American ought to desire. I never mean to put any colonist, or any human being in a situation not becoming a freeman.

On the popular claims which, at that time, were echoed and re-echoed through the kingdom, he is equally clear.—"The distinguishing part of our constitution is its liberty. To preserve that liberty inviolate, seems the particular duty and proper trust of a member of the House of Commons. But the liberty, the only liberty I mean, is a *liberty connected with order*, that not only exists along with order and virtue, but which *cannot exist at all without them.* It inheres in *good and steady* Government, as in its vital principle."

At the close of the poll, which was prolonged with unusual perseverance; another demand was made on his political fortitude, by that question of pledges which has fettered so many of the "independents" of our own day. Cruger had made some idle admission as to the power of binding the candidate. "I wish," said Burke in his final address, "that topic had been passed by, at a time when I have so little leisure to discuss it." He then proceeded to state his sentiments, which have, till our fatal period of change in every thing, formed the law on the subject. "It is the duty of the representative to sacrifice his repose, his pleasures, his satisfactions, to his constituents. But his unbiassed opinion, his mature judgment, his enlightened conscience, he ought not to sacrifice to you, to any man, or to any set of men living. They are a trust

from Providence, for the abuse of which he is deeply answerable. Your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgment; and *he betrays instead of serving you*, if he sacrifices it to your opinion. * * * * * If government were a matter of will, upon any side; yours, without question, ought to be superior. But government and legislation are matters of reason and judgment, not of inclination. And what sort of reason is that, in which the determination precedes the discussion; in which one set of men deliberate, and another decide; and where those who form the conclusion are perhaps three hundred miles distant from those who hear the arguments? * * * * * * Authoritative instructions, *mandates*, which the member is bound blindly and implicitly to obey; these are things utterly unknown to the laws of this land, and which arise from a fundamental *mistake of the whole order and tenor of our constitution.* Parliament is *not* a congress of ambassadors from different states, and with hostile interests, which interests each must maintain as an agent against other agents. But Parliament is a *deliberative* assembly of *one* nation with *one* interest, that of the *whole.* You choose a member indeed; but when you have chosen him, he is *not* member for Bristol, but he is a member of Parliament."

And those words were not the bravado of a man secure of his seat. He acted up to their spirit, even when the loss of his seat was involved in the action. In 1780, he repeated his declaration—"I did not obey your instructions. No; I conformed to the instruc-

tions of truth and nature, and maintained your interests *against* your opinions, with a constancy that became me. A representative worthy of you ought to be a person of stability. I am to look indeed to your opinions. But to such opinions as you and I *must* look to, five years hence. I was not to look at the flash of the day. I knew that you chose me in my place, along with others, to be a pillar of the State, and not a weather-cock on the top of the edifice, exalted for my levity and versatility; and of no use but to indicate the shiftings of every popular gale."

Election jests are not always long lived. But Cruger's deficiencies, in comparison with Burke's ability as a speaker, gave rise to a burlesque of the opulent man of trade, which is still memorable at Bristol. On the conclusion of Burke's fine address, Cruger stood up; but his fount of eloquence would not flow. At length the genius of the counting-house saved him from utter silence. "I say ditto to Mr Burke, I say ditto to Mr Burke!" he exclaimed; and rushed from the hustings, in a general roar of laughter and applause.

Burke's definition of the duties of a member of Parliament, with which he closed his speech, shows how little he shared in the extravagances of his time, or our own. It is as applicable to this hour, as it was to the moment when it was first hailed by every lover of legitimate freedom. "To be a good member of Parliament, is, let me tell you, no easy task; especially at this time, when there is so strong a disposition to run into the perilous extremes of servile compliance or *wild*

popularity. To unite circumspection with vigour is absolutely necessary, but it is extremely difficult. We are now members for a rich commercial city, that city is, however, but a part of a rich commercial nation, the interests of which are various, multiform, and intricate. We are members for that great nation, which itself, however, is but a part of a great empire, extended by our virtue and our fortune to the farthest limits of the east and the west. All these wide-spread interests must be considered, must be compared, must be reconciled, if possible. We are members for a free country, and surely we all know, that the machine of a free country is no simple thing; but, as intricate and as delicate as it is valuable. We are members in a great and ancient monarchy. And we must *preserve religiously* the true legal rights of the sovereign, which form *the key-stone* that binds together the noble and well-constructed arch of our empire and our Constitution.

A history of public questions might be a work worthy of some great benefactor of his country. It would show the perpetual facility with which the public mind may be fruitlessly disturbed; the guilty dexterity with which party imposture may inflame popular passion; and the utter absurdity with which nations may be impregnated, at the moment when they are giving themselves credit for supreme wisdom; the whole forming a great legacy of political common sense—an extract from the follies of the fathers, for an antidote to the crimes of posterity.

Within the latter half of the eighteenth century, the visitations of this periodic frenzy had thickened. Frederic and the Seven Years' War roused every talker in England into angry elocution, and the man was pronounced an enemy to his country who could doubt the *virtues* of the King of Prussia! This absurdity had its day. The public fever cooled away, and men were astonished at their own extravagance. The Middlesex elections next discovered the organ of political frenzy in the public brain. The nation was instantly in a paroxysm. Every man was an orator, and every orator exclaimed, that all past hazards were nothing to the inevitable ruin of the hour; for what was life without liberty, and what was liberty without Wilkes to save it? England saw this day pass too, and the patriot shelter himself in an opulent sinecure, and laugh at the dupes whose clamour had been its purchase. The American question gave the next summons. The whole host of obscure politicians were instantly awakened in their retreats, and poured forth, brandishing their blunted weapons for the colonies. Every factious clamour from beyond the Atlantic was answered from our shores with either a shout of applause, or a groan of sympathy. Thousands and tens of thousands inflamed themselves into the conception, that the hourly fate of England was hung in the balance of America. Thousands and tens of thousands imbued themselves with American politics, until the English complexion had vanished from their features, and they actually saw nothing in open revolt but a repulsion of tyranny.

We can now see, and we should see it with a natural alarm at the power of political illusion, the mingled frenzy and folly of the influence which this crisis usurped even over the higher minds of England. We may well shrink at the strength of the whirlpool; when we see it sweeping Burke and Chatham round, through every circle but the last; and those most muscular minds of the empire, barely making their escape from being absorbed and sunk in the common gulf of national perversion.

Roman Catholic Emancipation was the next fit of the public folly. Its cry rang through the empire, until the whole tribe of loose politics, lurking discontents, and incurable bitternesses against all government; the whole fretful accumulation of imaginary wrongs, imaginary rights, and imaginary panaceas for all the difficulties of mankind, were marshalled at the sound of that voice of evil. Other and more disciplined forces soon joined that levy. The priesthood sounded the trumpet from their altars. The armed banditti of Irish faction, long trained by mid-day insults of all authority, and midnight usurpation of all power, moved at the head of the insurrection, and Parliament was stormed. The great body of the English nation must be exonerated, in this instance, from the principle of the act, if they shall yet be compelled to share deeply in the misfortune of its consequences. But the battle was not now fought upon the old ground. The empire was excluded from the contest, and reserved only to be delivered over in fetters to the conqueror. The battle was fought not in Parliament, but in the Cabi-

net. The only weapons of English allegiance and wisdom, must be petition and remonstrance. The weapons of Popish ambition were arrogant appeals to foreign Powers, and sullen menaces of national separation. The walls of the Cabinet, impregnable to Constitutional entreaty, broke down before the assaults of unconstitutional violence.

Evil days are coming, evil days have come. Who talks now of the majesty of public deliberation? Who thinks now of the dignity of halls, which once echoed the noblest aspirations of human wisdom, philosophy and courage? Or who thinks of their old sacredness, without thinking of the Capitol taken by assault, and the Goth and the Gaul, the ferocious sons of the forest and the swamp, playing their savage gambols amid its altars, plucking the Roman Senator from his curule chair, and rending the ivory sceptre from his hand?

Burke's speech on American affairs, on the 22d of March 1775, was long recorded as one of his most remarkable displays of ability. In the general inefficiency of Opposition to concoct even any plausible grievance, the task fell upon Burke, and he employed himself in framing the memorable "Thirteen Articles," which were to be the purchase of national tranquillity. The project belonged to party, and it was, of course, extravagant; it was intended to fail, and, of course, it failed. But its effect on the war, was mischievous. Rash conciliation naturally inflames the hostility which it proposes to cure; America proceeded

in her rebellion, only the more fortified by the knowledge that she had active partisans, and inactive repugnants, in the mother country. The speech was the work of a man in fetters; but it retains a value from its touches of that moral wisdom, which embalms the most temporary and decaying subjects of the great orator. * * * * "I have no very exalted opinion of *paper government*, said Burke, nor of any politics in which the plan is to be wholly separated from the execution. * * * * Public calamity is a mighty leveller; and there are occasions when any, even the slightest, chance of doing good must be laid hold on, even by the most inconsiderable person. * * * * The proposition is peace. Not peace through the medium of war. Not peace to be hunted through the labyrinth of intricate and endless negotiations. Not peace to arise out of universal discord, fomented on principle in all parts of the Empire. Not peace to depend on the juridical determination of perplexing questions; or the precise marking the shadowy boundaries of a complex government. It is simple peace, sought in its natural course, and in its ordinary haunts. It is peace, sought in the spirit of peace. * * * * Refined policy ever has been the parent of confusion, and ever will be, so long as the world endures. Plain good intention, which is as easily discovered at the first view as fraud is surely detected at last, is of no mean force in governing mankind. Genuine simplicity of heart is a healing and cementing principle. * * * * Great and acknowledged force is not impaired in either effect or

opinion by an unwillingness to exert itself. The superior power may offer peace with honour and with safety. Such an offer, from such a power, will be attributed to magnanimity. But the concessions of the weak are the concessions of fear. When such a one is disarmed, he is wholly at the mercy of his superior, and he loses for ever that time and those chances, which, as they happen to all men, are the strength and resources of all inferior power. * * * I look on force, not only as an odious, but a feeble instrument, for preserving a people so numerous, so growing, and so spirited as this, in a profitable and subordinate connexion. First, the use of force alone is but *temporary*. It may subdue for a moment, but it does not remove the necessity of subduing again. A nation is not governed, which is perpetually to be conquered. My next objection is its *uncertainty*. Terror is not always the effect of force, and an armament is not a victory. If you do not succeed, you are without resource. For, conciliation failing, force remains; but force failing, no further hope of conciliation is left. Power and authority are sometimes bought by kindness; but they can never be begged as alms, by an impoverished and defeated violence. A further objection to force is, that you *impair the object* by your very endeavours to preserve it. The thing you fought for is not the thing which you recover; but depreciated, sunk, wasted, and consumed in the contest."

His remarks on the condition of society in the Southern Provinces of the United States give some insight

into that original difference which must end in national struggle. "In Virginia and the Carolinas, they have a vast multitude of slaves. Where this is the case in any part of the world, those who are free, are by far the most proud and jealous of their freedom. Freedom to them is not only an enjoyment, but a kind of rank and privilege. Not seeing there that freedom, as in countries where it is a common blessing, and as broad and general as the air, may be united with much abject toil, with great misery, with all the exterior of servitude, Liberty looks among them, like something more noble and liberal. I do not mean to commend the superior morality of this sentiment, which has at least as much pride as virtue in it; but I cannot alter the nature of man. The fact is so; and the people of the Southern Colonies are much more strongly, and with a higher and more stubborn spirit, attached to Liberty, than those to the Northward. Such were all the ancient commonwealths; such were our Gothic ancestors; such in our days were the Poles; and such will be all masters of slaves, who are not slaves themselves. In such a people, the haughtiness of domination combines with the spirit of freedom, fortifies it, and renders it invincible."

His observation on the general taste for legal studies which predominated in America is expressive. But Sectarianism was the superior teacher of Revolution. "When great honours and great emoluments do not win over legal knowledge to the service of the state, it is a formidable adversary to government. *Abeunt stu-*

dia in mores. This study renders men acute, inquisitive, dexterous, prompt in attack, ready in defence, full of resources. In other countries, the people, more simple and of a less mercurial cast, judge of an ill principle in government only by an actual grievance; here they anticipate the evil and judge of the pressure of the grievance by the badness of the principle. They augur misgovernment at a distance, and snuff the approach of tyranny in every tainted breeze." * * * "Three thousand miles of ocean lie between you and the colonies. No contrivance can prevent the effect of this distance in weakening government. Seas roll and months pass between the order and the execution. And the want of a speedy explanation of a single point is enough to defeat a whole system. You have indeed winged Ministers of vengeance, who carry your bolts in their pounces to the uttermost verge of the sea. But there a power steps in, which limits the arrogance of raging passions and furious elements, and says, 'So far shalt thou go, and no further!' Who are you, that should fret and rage, and bite the chains of nature?"

His anticipation of the results that must follow from the extension of the States through western America, is probably not far from its fulfilment. "You cannot station garrisons in every part of those deserts. If you drive the people from one place, they will carry on their annual tillage, and remove with their flocks and herds to another. Many of the people in the back settlements are already little attached to particular situations. Already they have topped the Apalachian

mountains. Thence they behold before them an immense plain, one vast rich level meadow, a square of five hundred miles. Over this they would wander without a possibility of restraint; they would change their manners with their habits of life; would soon forget a government by which they were disowned; would become hordes of English Tartars, and pouring down upon your frontiers a fierce and irresistible cavalry, become masters of your governors and counsellors, your collectors and comptrollers, and of all the slaves that adhered to them. Such would, and in no long time must be, the effect of attempting to forbid as a crime, and to suppress as an evil, the command and blessing of Providence, increase and multiply."

Towards the close of this great performance, he lays down the principle, (so adverse to that of the enthusiasts for new constitutions,) that, in all things, even in freedom, we must consider the price, and settle with ourselves how far we may be satisfied with what is attainable. "Although there are some among us who think our constitution wants many improvements to make it a complete system of liberty, perhaps none who are of that opinion would think it right to aim at such improvement by disturbing his country, and risking every thing that is dear to him. In every arduous enterprise we consider what we are to lose, as well as what we are to gain; and the more and better stake of liberty every people possess, the less they will hazard in a vain attempt to make it more. These are *the cords of a man.* Man acts from adequate motives

relative to his interest, and not on metaphysical speculations. Aristotle, the great master of reasoning, cautions us, and with great weight and propriety, against this species of delusive geometrical accuracy in moral arguments, as the most fallacious of all sophistry."

In giving these fragments, the object has been to select the maxims of political truth. The passages of oratorical beauty have been passed by; yet, it would be dishonest to all feeling of excellence, to omit, often as it has been quoted, the unrivalled apostrophe to old Lord Bathurst, on the progress of the Colonies.

" Mr Speaker,—I cannot prevail on myself to hurry over this great consideration. It is good for us to be here. We stand where we have an immense view, of what is, and what is past. Clouds, indeed, and darkness, rest upon the future. Let us, however, before we descend from this noble eminence, reflect that this growth of our national prosperity has happened within the short period of the life of man. It has happened within sixty-eight years. There are those alive whose memory might touch the two extremities. For instance, my Lord Bathurst might remember all the stages of the progress. He was in 1704 of an age at least to be made to comprehend such things. He was then old enough *acta parentum jam legere, et quæ sit cognoscere virtus.*

" Suppose, Sir, that the angel of this auspicious youth, foreseeing the many virtues which made him one of the most fortunate men of his age, had opened to him

in vision, that when in the fourth generation, the third prince of the House of Brunswick had sat twelve years on the throne of that nation, which (by the happy issue of moderate and healing councils) was to be made Great Britain, he should see his son Lord Chancellor of England, turn back the current of hereditary dignity to its fountain, and raise him to an higher rank of peerage, whilst he enriched the family with a new one. If amidst these bright and happy scenes of honour and prosperity, that angel should have drawn up the curtain, and unfolded the rising glories of his country, and whilst he was gazing with admiration on the then commercial grandeur of England, the Genius should point out to him a little speck, scarce visible in the mass of the national interest, a small seminal principle rather than a formed body, and should tell him, 'Young man, there is America, which at this day serves for little more than to amuse you with stories of savage men and uncouth manners; yet shall, before you taste of death, show itself equal to the whole of that commerce which now attracts the envy of the world. Whatever England has been growing to by a progressive increase of improvement brought in by varieties of people, by succession of civilizing conquests, and civilizing settlements, in a series of seventeen hundred years, you shall see as much added to her by America in the course of a single life!' If the state of his country had been foretold to him, would it not require all the sanguine credulity of youth, and all the fervid glow of enthusiasm, to make him believe it?

Fortunate man, he has lived to see it! Fortunate indeed, if he lives to see nothing that shall vary the prospect, and cloud the setting of his day."

In this glowing anticipation the orator was more fortunate than the prophet. But Johnson's keen burlesque of the prediction is worth remembering, perhaps for more than its ridicule.

"Suppose,* Mr Speaker; that to Wharton, or to Marlborough, or any of the eminent Whigs of the last age, the Devil had, not with any great impropriety, consented to appear; he would, perhaps, in somewhat like these words, have commenced the conversation:—

"You seem, my Lord, to be concerned at the judicious apprehension, that while you are sapping the foundations of royalty at home, and propagating here the dangerous doctrine of resistance; the distance of America may secure its inhabitants from your arts, though active; but I will unfold to you the gay prospects of futurity. This people, now so innocent and harmless, shall draw the sword against their mother-country, and bathe its point in the blood of their benefactors; this people, now contented with a little, shall

* Mrs Piozzi thus introduces the passage:—

"It was in the year 1775, that Mr Edmund Burke made the famous speech in Parliament, that struck even foes with admiration, and friends with delight. Among the nameless thousands who are content to echo those praises they have not skill to invent, I ventured, before Dr Johnson himself, to applaud with rapture the beautiful passage in it concerning Lord Bathurst and the Angel; which, said our Doctor, had I been in the House, I would have answered thus:—

then refuse to spare what they themselves confess they could not miss; and those men, now so honest and so grateful, shall in return for its peace and protection, send their vile agents into the House of Parliament, there to sow the seeds of sedition, and propagate confusion, perplexity, and pain. Be not dispirited, then, at the contemplation of their present happy state; I promise you, that anarchy, poverty, and death, shall by my care be carried even across the spacious Atlantic, and settle in America itself the sure consequences of our beloved Whiggism."

But every portion of the speech abounds with noble illustration. In allusion to the undoubted fact, that the true way to secure a revenue is to begin, not by fiscal regulations, but by making the people masters of their own wealth; it suddenly starts from the simplest form of statement, into various and luminous figures. "What, says the financier, is peace to us, without money. Your plan gives us no remedy. Yes, but it does, for it secures to the subject the power of *refusal*, the first of all revenues. Experience is a cheat, and fact a liar, if this power in the subject, of proportioning his grant, or of not granting at all, has not been found the richest mine of revenue ever discovered by the skill or the fortune of man. It does not indeed vote you any paltry or limited sum. But it gives the strong-box itself, the fund, the bank, from which only revenues can arise among a people sensible of freedom. *Posita luditur arca.* Most may be taken where most is accumulated. And what is the soil or climate where

experience has not uniformly proved, that the voluntary flow of heaped up plenty, bursting from the weight of its own luxuriance, has ever run with a more copious stream of revenue, than could be squeezed from the dry husks of oppressed indigence by the straining of all the political machinery in the world ?"

CHAPTER V.

Prevents the Rockingham Secession—Franklin—Absentee Tax—Alliance of France with America—Burke loses his Seat for Bristol—Speech on the Household—French Finance—Neckar.

DURING this anxious period; while all the elements of public life were darkening, and the tempest which began in America threatened to make the round of the whole European horizon, Burke found leisure and buoyancy of spirit for the full enjoyment of society. There he was still the universal favourite. Even Johnson, adverse as he was to him in politics, and accustomed to treat all adversaries with rough contempt or angry sarcasm, smoothed down his mane, and drew in his talons in the presence of Burke. On one occasion, when Goldsmith, in his vague style, talked of the impossibility of living in intimacy with a person having a different opinion on any prominent topic, Johnson rebuked him, as usual. "Why, no, Sir. You must only shun the subject on which you disagree. For instance, I can live very well with Burke. I love his knowledge, his genius, his diffusion and affluence of conversation. But I would not talk to him of the Rockingham party."

In his reserve upon this topic, Johnson probably meant to exhibit more kindness than met the ear, for the Rockingham party had become the tender point of Burke's public feelings. That party had been originally led to take refuge under its nominal leader, by the mere temptation of high Whig title, hereditary rank, and large fortune. But the Marquis had been found inefficient, or unlucky, and his parliamentary weight diminished day by day. Burke still fought, kept actual ruin at a distance, and signalized himself by all the vigour, zeal, and enterprise of an invincible debater. But nothing could resist the force of circumstances; the party must change its leader, or give up its arms. In this emergency, the Marquis proposed a total secession from Parliament. To his proposal Burke, with due submission, gave way; but accompanied the acquiescence with a letter, in which, in stating his reasons for retreat, he so strikingly stated the reasons for the contrary, that the Marquis changed his opinion at once; and the field was retained for a new trial of fortune. Burke's impression, doubtless, was, that nothing can be gained, though every thing may be lost, by giving up the contest; that nothing is sooner forgotten than the public man who is no longer before the public eye; and that, whatever the nation may discover in vigorous resistance, it will never discover courage in flight, or wisdom in despair.

His opinion on this point was touched on, in a subsequent conversation with his friend Sir Joshua Reynolds. "Mr Burke, I do not mean to flatter," said

Sir Joshua, "but when posterity reads one of your speeches in Parliament, it will be difficult to believe that you took so much pains, knowing with certainty that it could produce no effect—that not one vote would be gained by it."

"Waiving your compliment to me," was the reply, "I shall say, in general, that it is very well worth while for a man to take pains to speak well in Parliament. A man who has vanity speaks to display his talents. And if a man speaks well, he gradually establishes a certain reputation and consequence in the general opinion, which sooner or later will have its political reward. Besides, though not one vote is gained, a good speech has its effect. Though an act which has been ably opposed passes into a law, yet in its progress it is modelled, it is softened in such a manner, that we see plainly the minister has been told, that the members attached to him are so sensible of its injustice or absurdity from what they have heard, that it must be altered."

He again observed,—"There are many members, who generally go with the Minister, who will not go all lengths. There are many honest, well-meaning country gentlemen, who are in Parliament only to keep up the consequence of their families. Upon most of those a good speech will have influence."

"What next," asked Sir Joshua, "would be the result; if a Minister, secure of a majority, were to resolve that there should be no speaking on his side?" Burke answered; "That he must soon go out. The plan has been tried already, but it was found it would not do."

In the midst of the more important matters of debate, his natural good humour often relieved the gravity of the House. His half-vexed, half-sportive remark on the speech of David Hartley, the member for Hull, an honest man, but a dreary debater, was long remembered. Burke had come, intending to speak on a motion on American affairs, to be brought forward by the member for Hull. But that gentleman's style rapidly thinned the benches. At length, when the House was almost a desert, he called for the reading of the Riot Act, to support some of his arguments. Burke's impatience could be restrained no longer, and under the double vexation of seeing the motion ruined, and his own speech likely to be thrown away for want of an audience, he started up, almost instinctively, exclaiming, "The Riot Act, the Riot Act! for what? does not my honourable friend see that he has dispersed the mob already?"

His exertions on the American question naturally brought him into intercourse with the principal persons connected with the subject. He corresponded with General Lee, a man of some acquirements, but of extreme eccentricity, if not insane. Lee afterwards took service in the American army, where he soon quarrelled with his superiors as much as at home; and found as little to reconcile his giddy understanding and worthless heart, in republicanism as in monarchy. Some connexion with Franklin was the natural result of his position in the House. But Franklin at that time was not the revolter that he afterwards became. He cal-

led upon Burke the day before he took his final leave of London, in 1775, and had a long interview with him. On this occasion Franklin expressed great regret for the calamities, which he viewed as the consequence of the ministerial determinations; professing, that nothing could give him more pain than the separation of the colonies from the mother-country; that America had enjoyed many happy days under her rule, and that he never expected to see such again! Yet, it is evident, that Franklin was irreconcileably hostile; this feeling had broken out on the most accidental occasions. One day, visiting the source of the Thames, he exclaimed, "And is it this narrow stream, that is to have dominion over a country that contains the Hudson and the Ohio?" On leaving the Privy-Council, where he had been examined and taken to task by Wedderburne the Attorney-General, he murmured in the bitterness of personal revenge, "For this I will make your King a little king." This was not the language of a peace-maker. The Americans still panegyrize this man. His worldly skill makes the standing figure of the fourth of July speeches, those annual elaborate effusions of Republican eloquence. But whatever they may do with his name, they should abjure his spirit. To Franklin and to his doctrine of selfishness, his substitution of the mere business of amassing, for the generous and natural uses of wealth, his turning the American into a mere calculator of profit and loss, and America into a huge counting-house; is due a vast portion of every evil belonging to

the character of her people, and of that desperate Democracy which so inevitably threatens her government. The sooner they lay his maxims and his memory in the grave together, the better for the national honour. The spirit of a pedlar ought not to preside over the councils of a great people. The Americans may erect his statue in their Temple of Mammon, if they will; but they must close the temple, and embrace a loftier worship, before they can be worthy of the renown of their ancestors, or be fitting trustees of freedom to their posterity.

The United States have before them the noblest prospect that can be offered to a people, the power of spreading law and liberty, the happiness of social life, and the light of religion, through the future millions of a boundless land. But, to complete that destiny, they must adopt principles worthy of its distinction. They must soar, not creep. It would be almost profane to doubt, that there are minds already in America too proud and too wise to mistake the crafty politics of their country for statesmanship, or the usurpation of deserts for empire. Such minds must become the leaders of America; or even her vigour, opulence, and enterprize, will but hurry her into ruin.

At this period, the patriots of the Irish Parliament were as much at a loss for a grievance, and as glad to adopt a fictitious one, as their brethren of the English. An Absentee Tax was the resource. Burke's conceptions of the utter impolicy of this tax; which had been proposed by Mr Flood, then at the head of Opposition,

in Ireland, and been weakly acquiesced in by the Ministry of 1773, were thus given in a letter to Sir Charles Bingham. "I look," said he, "upon this projected tax in a very evil light. I think it is not advisable; —I am sure it is not necessary. And, as it is not a mere matter of finance, but involves a political question of much importance, I consider the principle and precedent as far worse than the thing itself. * * * * In the first place, it strikes at the power of this country; in the end, at the union of the whole empire. I do not mean to express any thing invidious concerning the superintending authority of Great Britain. But, if it be true, that the several bodies which make up this complicated mass, are to be preserved as one empire, an authority sufficient to preserve this unity, and by its equal weight and pressure to consolidate the various parts, must reside somewhere, and that somewhere can be only in England. * * * * * A free communication by *discretionary* residence is necessary to all the other purposes of communication. * * * If men may be disabled from following their suits here, they may be thus taxed into a denial of justice. A tax of two shillings may not do it; but the principle implies it. They who restrain may prohibit. They who may impose two shillings in the pound, may impose ten. And those who condition the tax to six months' annual absence, may carry that condition to six weeks, or to six days, and thereby totally defeat the means which have been provided for extensive and impartial justice. * * * * * What is taxing a resort to, and

residence in, any place, but declaring that your connexion with that place is a grievance? Is not such an Irish tax a virtual declaration that England is a *foreign country;* and a renunciation of the principle of *common naturalization,* which runs through the whole empire? * * * * * I can easily conceive, that a citizen of Dublin, who looks no further than his counter, may think that Ireland will be repaid for such a loss by any small diminution of taxes, or any increase in the circulation of money, that may be laid out in the purchase of claret or groceries in his corporation. But I cannot think that any educated man, any man who looks with an enlightened eye on the interests of Ireland, can believe that it is not highly for the advantage of Ireland, that this Parliament, which, whether right or wrong, will make some laws to bind Ireland, should have some persons in it, who, by connexion, by property, or by early prepossessions, are attached to the welfare of the country. * * * * There is another matter in the tax that contradicts a very great principle necessary for preserving the union of the various parts of the State; because it does, in effect, discountenance intermarriage and mutual inheritance;—things that bind countries more closely together than any laws or constitutions whatsoever. Is it right, that a woman who marries into Ireland, and perhaps well purchases her jointure or her dower there, should not, after her husband's death, have it in her choice to return to her country and her friends without being taxed for it? Or, if an Irish heiress should marry in

an English family, and that great property in both countries should thereby come to be united in the common issue; shall the descendant of that marriage abandon his natural connexions, his family interests, his public and private duties, and be compelled to take up his residence in Ireland? Is there any sense or justice in it, unless you affirm that there should be no such intermarriage, and no such natural inheritance? Is there a shadow of reason, that, because a Lord Buckingham, a Duke of Devonshire, a Sir George Saville, possesses property in Ireland, which has descended to them without any act of theirs, they should abandon their duty in Parliament, and spend their winters in Dublin? or, having spent the session in Westminster, must they abandon their seats, and all their family interest, in Yorkshire and Derbyshire, and pass the rest of the year in Wicklow, Cork, or Tyronne? * * * * But a man may have property in more parts of the Empire. He may have property in Jamaica, as well as in England and Ireland. I know some who have property in all of them. Suppose this poor distracted citizen of the whole Empire, providing (if the nature of the laws will admit of it,) a flying camp, and dividing his year, as well as he can, between England and Ireland, and at the charge of two town houses, and two country houses in both kingdoms. In this situation he receives an account that a law is transmitted from Jamaica to tax absentees from that province, which is impoverished by the European residence of the possessors of their lands. How is he to

escape this *ricochet* of cross-firing of so many opposite batteries of notice and regulation? If he comply, he is more likely to be a citizen of the Atlantic Ocean and the Irish Sea, than of either of the countries."

He then closely follows the argument into the case of minors sent to English schools or colleges; of law students sent to the English Inns of Court; of people forced by infirmity to change their residence; of persons of embarrassed fortunes, who retire in order to retrench, and asks, Are such fit objects of a tax? "You begin to burthen those people, precisely at the time when their circumstances of health and fortune render them objects of relief and commiseration."

To those profound reasons might be added the obvious ones—That an absentee tax would be a virtual prohibition of all English money in the purchase of lands in Ireland; for, who would buy, where he was to pay an additional tax as the purchaser? Thus the value of every acre in Ireland would be instantly sunk. A still more striking reason against an absentee tax would be, the almost total impossibility of raising it, in any instance where the landed owner was disinclined to assist in the collection. Is the tax to be contingent on a six months absence from the country? Or is there to be a register of the goings in and out of every man? Or is an army of spies to be employed to trace gentlemen to their dwellings? Or is *every* owner of property (for the law must comprehend every man capable of absenting himself, for whatever cause,) to be compelled to make a return of his presence every six months to

Government? Or is residence to imply the abiding of the *whole* family in the country, or of a part, or of the head of the family alone? In the former instances, who is to ascertain whether the requisite *number* of the family constantly reside? Or if the residence of the head of the house be satisfactory, how is the country to be a gainer by the residence of a solitary, and doubtless a highly discontented, resident, who sends off his rental to support the expenditure or amusements of his family in Bath or London? Or, does not the whole conception imply a scandalous, vexatious, and expensive espionage? Or if, not the landholder but his rents are to be the object, what is to intercept the transmission of money to any part of the earth? This part of the conception would imply an impossibility. A few men of large fortunes, and constantly residing in England, a Marquis of Lansdowne, or a Duke of Devonshire, might be mulcted for the crimes of their ancestors in paying their money for Irish estates, and not being able to be in Ireland and England at the same time; but the great multitude against whom the act was especially levelled, would especially elude it. The crowd, whom in bitterness much more than impolicy, the levellers would wish to fine for enjoying themselves for a year or two in any other portion of the earth than Ireland, and preferring Brighton and Cheltenham to a visit from Captain Rock, or an assassination at their own doors; would unquestionably evade the statute; and leave nothing for its advocates but fruitless declamation and expense thrown away. Already, in 1773,

though the measure had received the sanction of Ministers, the embarrassments of its practical operation, and the probably interested and factious motives of its proposers, had been so strongly suggested, that the project was suppressed.

We now draw to the close of one of the epochs of this great man's public career. He was still under the obligations of party. The American question was fastened on him by the hands of others, and he dragged it along, with a vigour that redeemed his luckless pledge of fidelity. He persevered to the last moment, while there was a hope of reconciling the countries; and supported his repeated proposals with an enthusiasm of eloquence which held the House in perpetual astonishment. A speech in which he denounced the employment of the Indian savages, as an aggravation of the horrors of war, is said to have produced effects unequalled by any effort of modern times. Of this speech there is no record, further than its impression on the House. At its close, Colonel Barrè started up, and declared, that if it were but published, he would have it nailed up on every church-door in the kingdom, by the side of the proclamation for the General Fast. Sir George Saville pronounced in all quarters, that "he who had not been present on that night, had not witnessed the greatest triumph of eloquence within memory." Governor Johnstone solemnly averred, that "it was fortunate for the Noble Lords on the Treasury Bench, (North and Germain,) that there were no strangers present, (the gallery

having been cleared,) as mere indignation would have roused the people in the streets to tear them in pieces on their way home."

But an event altogether unconnected with the labours of the British Parliament, suddenly brought the contests of party to an end. America formed an alliance with France. The war suddenly became hazardous on the only side which ever threatens the British Empire with danger. Opposition was not less startled by this event than Ministers. If party ever feels, it felt then, and regretted the work of its own hands. The declaration of Colonial independence was received by the antagonists of Administration with unequivocal surprise, and even with bitter regret. "We must take it," was their language; "but it is not as a matter of choice, but of hard and over-powering necessity." Burke declared, that "it made him sick at heart, that it struck him to the soul, that he felt the claim to be essentially injurious to Great Britain, and one of which she could never get rid. No, never, never, never! It was not to be thought that *he* wished for the independence of America. Far from it. He felt it a circumstance exceedingly detrimental to the fame, and exceedingly detrimental to the interests of his country." Lord Chatham was equally full of eloquent remorse: He exclaimed, that "he could never bring himself to admit the independence of the Colonies; that the hand which signed the concession might as well rend the jewels from the British Crown at once; that the sun of England would go down, never to rise again." Such

is the sincerity of party, and such sometimes its punishment. Those great men had laboured, for years, to pull down the rightful supremacy which they loved; to raise up a revolt to the rank of a triumph; and give the loose and desultory efforts of popular ambition the form and consistency of Empire. But while they contemplated nothing beyond the overthrow of the Minister, they found that their weapons had passed through his shield, and struck the bosom of their country.

But those were the errors of party, not of Burke; of his noviciate, not of his head or heart; of his allegiance to a political superior, not of his true genius, acting on his ripened knowledge of the interests of the Empire.

It is remarkable, that as he gradually extricated himself from the bonds of Whiggism, he became, not merely a freer, but a more enlightened statesman. While he continued in the ranks of the Rockingham party, nothing but the extraordinary merits of his public speaking could rescue him from the general cloud which gathered on the fame of Opposition. Further on, in the second stage of his political career, when he steered side by side with Fox; his rank as a patriot was still partially obscured, and his public services were narrowed, wasted, and humiliated, by the conjunction. But his time was to come. To sincerity there is always a triumph at last. It was, when he hoisted his flag alone, when he steered aloof from party, when, abandoning the creeks and shallows of personal policy, he boldly followed the impulses of his own mighty

mind; that his true character became visible, and he achieved the whole splendour of that fame, which, from his tomb, still honours his country.

The second period of the life of this memorable man, commencing with his acceptance of office, and ending with his abjuration of the Whigs, abounded in the most striking political change. The British Cabinet was in a perpetual state of convulsion. Ministers shifted their places, and sometimes their principles, like the scenes of a pantomime. The "King's Friends," the "Landed Interest," and the "Friends of the People," were alternately uppermost, and plunged into the lowest depths of political disgrace. The wheel of power was in perpetual whirl. But the world, too, was in a constant state of change. America had hoisted the standard of civil war, and had seen it, exultingly answered by a signal from France. England was half-revolutionized, and might have rivalled France in ruin, but for the prowess of one man. Unexampled ability, sustained by integrity beyond all suspicion, and patriotism equal to all sacrifice, constituted Pitt the national leader; and though he did not live to see the triumph of his efforts, he proved irresistibly, that if the British empire was to be preserved, it must be by the virtue of his principles.

We have seen Burke rising by rapid steps to the summit of parliamentary fame. There he stood fixed. Nothing could shake the supremacy founded upon his acknowledged powers. He had attained an equal eminence of popularity. But here he was to suffer the natural fluctuations of an element, to which the waves and the

winds are constancy. He had been lifted up by popular passion to the height of popular confidence, he was now to be swept down by the mere reaction of the surge. The people of Bristol, indignant at Government for rejecting the fantastic claims of America, became suddenly indignant at their representative for supporting the natural claims of Ireland. The wrongs of revolters in open arms against England, awoke all their sympathies; the rights of their fellow subjects on the other side of the Irish Channel sharpened all their resentment. To please both was clearly impossible. Burke would have scorned to play the sycophant to either. But his choice was made. Always superior to the meanness which calls itself prudence, he took the side of justice, and in that hour cast himself for ever out of the representative glories of Bristol. He was equally unlucky in both instances. Ireland, buoyed up with extravagant hope, pronounced the man all but a traitor, who advised moderation. Bristol, angry at finding that he was not a slave, branded him as a renegade; and under the "pitiless, pelting storm" of rabble obloquy, this eminent man slowly learned the greatest, if the tardiest, talent of public life; the firmness, that, scorning the volatile and profligate breath of party, draws its reward, like its reason, from its own bosom.

Once in every half century, the populace of England discover that they are the most aggrieved body on the globe. All the old institutions of the land are found to be utterly worthless; Church and State

equally demand an universal change; the political buttresses which have supported our freedom for centuries, are seen, by the sudden discernment of the mob, to be constructed on false foundations; the safeguards, for which the ablest men of England struggled and died, are declared by every fabricator of paragraphs in a journal to be tricks on popular credulity; allegiance to Kings, reverence to the Church, and honour to society, are ridiculed as the exploded invention of times when the human understanding was in its infancy; and with the populace for the philosophers, and their haranguers for the legislators, the new course of illumination begins—and *ends*.

In the year 1779, the discovery had been peculiarly pressed on the national mind, that the law of the multitude was entitled to be the law of the land. Burke received sufficient intimation, that any doubt upon this subject must be his overthrow. His party in the House were probably alarmed at the loss of so powerful a champion; and for the evident purpose of retrieving his position, and retaining his seat, he was urged to his famous motion on "Economical Reform." The name has since become so obnoxious as a cover for every hazard, to be purchased by every folly; that its simple adoption may seem a stain upon the memory of a great man. But it is to be remembered, that party has its bondage, not the less severe that its fetters invisibly crush and corrode the mind. Reform was essential as a popular bribe. But the violence which reforms by tearing down, and the cove-

tousness which purifies by rapine, were equally alien to the mind of this great leader. In declaring change necessary, Burke reverently stopped at the portal of the Constitution; he did not venture to lay a finger upon the shrine, which so many thousands of the school of *patriotism* would have been rejoiced to rob; and leaving it to others to offer "strange fire upon the altar," he proceeded to purify and brighten its exterior, to remove impediments to the national investigation, and to make the chief abuses of time and neglect, too public to exist, or be suffered to exist, any longer. The speech which he addressed to the House on this topic, is still quoted as one of the most pregnant and powerful of his triumphs; it contains some of the finest exemplifications of parliamentary eloquence in all its forms; and, by its brilliant dexterity, no less than its vast accumulation of fact; and by its rich and poetic fancy, no less than its vigorous reasoning, might alone place the speaker at the head of philosophic statesmen.

The commencement of this great performance has been justly criticised, as coming too circuitously to its object. Still, we must take into consideration the difficulties in which the advocate for the surrender of salaries and the extinction of offices must feel himself involved. Burke was evidently sensible of the necessity of treading his way cautiously upon those "fires hidden under treacherous ashes." "I enter," says he, "perfectly into the nature and consequences of my attempt. I advance to it with a tremor that shakes me to the inmost fibre of my frame. I feel that I engage in a business, in

itself most ungracious, totally wide of the course of prudent conduct, and I really think, the most completely adverse that can be imagined to the natural turn and temper of my own mind. I know that all parsimony is of a quality approaching to unkindness, and that on some person or other every reform must operate as a sort of punishment. Indeed, the whole class of the severe and restrictive virtues are at a market almost too high for humanity. What is worse, there are very few of those virtues which are not capable of being imitated, and even outdone, in many of their most striking effects, by the worst of vices. Malignity and envy will carve much more sharply in the work of retrenchment, than frugality and providence."

But the personal sacrifice, which few men had a right to regard more; yet which no man more loftily defied, when the occasion demanded; did not escape the Orator, who was also a candidate for the distinctions of public employment. The man who was to triumph in debate by the keenness of his investigation into the abuses of office, and to gain the palm of public approbation by his vigour in pursuing patronage to its strongholds, must have felt that he was closing the doors of administration upon himself. This he expresses with prophetic consciousness. "It is much more easy to reconcile this measure with humanity, than to bring it to any agreement with *prudence*. I do not mean that little, selfish, pitiful, bastard thing, which sometimes goes by the name of a family in which it is not legitimate, and to which it is a disgrace. I mean even that

public and enlarged prudence, which, apprehensive of being disabled from rendering acceptable services to the world, withholds itself from those that are invidious. Gentlemen who are apt to form their ideas of Kings from Kings of *former times*, might dread the anger of a reigning Prince! They who are more provident of the future, or, by being young, are more interested in it, might tremble at the resentment of the successor; they might see a long, dull, dreary, unvaried vista of despair and exclusion for *half a century* before them. This is no pleasant prospect at the outset of a political journey."

Another shape of this many-headed hazard next developes itself to his eye, and, undoubtedly, to a man who desired to pass smoothly through life, to glide along the inclined plane of the world without shocks or jolts to the machine, to float down the stream of society without being submerged in its eddies, or hurled down its cataracts, nothing could be more startling than the host of personal hostilities which this measure was sure to create. "The private enemies to be made in all attempts of this kind," said he, "are innumerable, and this enmity will be the more bitter, and the more dangerous too, because a sense of dignity will oblige them to conceal the cause of their resentment. Very few men of great families, and extensive connexions, but will feel the smart of a cutting reform in some close relation, some bosom friend, some pleasant acquaintance, some dear, protected dependent. Emolument is taken from some, patronage from others, objects of pursuit

from all. Men forced into an involuntary independence, will abhor the authors of a blessing which in their eyes has so very near a resemblance to a curse. Services of the present sort create no attachments. The cold commendation of a public advantage never was, and never will be, a match for the quick sensibility of a private loss. When many people have an interest in railing, sooner or later they will bring a considerable degree of unpopularity upon the measure. The Reformation will act against the reformers, and revenge will produce all the effects of corruption."

After having thus gone through his preliminary positions, he lays down a long series of principles, all important, and generally curious. We shall wander through this political *sylva*, and throw together a few of its more characteristic products.

"If there is any sacrifice to be made of either estimation or fortune, the smallest is the best; Commanders-in-Chief are not to be put upon the forlorn hope.

"If dawnings of success serve to animate our diligence, they are good; if they tend to increase our presumption, they are worse than defeats.

"Taxing is an easy business. Any projector can contrive new impositions; any bungler can add to the old. But is it altogether wise to have no other bounds to your impositions, than the patience of those who are to bear them?"

His observations on French finance form a striking contrast to his ideas in after times. But it is to be observed, that he now spoke only from slight and ge-

neral knowledge; that his panegyric was merely episodical; that Neckar was then exhibiting only the bright side of his policy; and that the time was still to come when that policy changed its phase, and by the course of nature fell deeper into eclipse hour by hour, until total darkness overhung the land. "When I look to the other side of the water," said Burke, in alluding to the new financial experiments of France, "I cannot help recollecting what Pyrrhus said, on reconnoitring the Roman camp—'Those barbarians have nothing barbarous in their discipline.' When I look into the proceedings of the French King, I see nothing of the character and genius of arbitrary finance, none of the bold frauds of bankrupt power, none of the wild struggles and plunges of despotism in distress, no lopping off from the capital of debt, no suspension of interest, no robbery under the name of loan, no raising the value, no debasing the substance of the coin. I see neither Louis the Fourteenth nor Louis the Fifteenth. On the contrary, I behold with astonishment, rising before me, by the very hands of arbitrary power, and in the very midst of war and confusion, a regular methodical system of public credit; I behold a fabric laid on the natural and solid foundation of trust and confidence among men, and rising by fair gradations, order over order, according to the just rules of symmetry and art. What a reverse of things! Principle, method, regularity, economy, frugality, justice to individuals, and care of the people, are the resources with which France makes war upon Great Britain."

In this fine declamation there was a display of all the prominent features of Burke's mind; his natural delight in the developement of human resources, even in an enemy; his fondness for those larger financial pursuits, which, leaving the exigencies of the day to meaner intellects, extend their view over the wants and energies of posterity; and his quick and sensitive feeling of all that was bold, dazzling, and magnificent in speculation. Burke could never have been a Frenchman. The rash ostentation and the narrow performance, the dramatic pomp of the project, and the meagre dexterity of the details, all the characteristics of the Œconomical School, must have rapidly disgusted his pure and powerful mind. But he was an Irishman, not more in his birthplace than in his spirit; captivated by brilliancy of prospect, until he forgot the roughness of the ground beneath his feet; giving public men credit to the full amount of their declarations; and dreaming that the possession of power must naturally impel the possessor to objects of the noblest ambition. He was still in the vigour of his early imaginations—a poet bringing his fervours into politics, a philosopher inventing Utopias, a man of genius investing the whole vast and diversified scene of public affairs in the colours of his own creative mind. But he speedily found lamentable reason to distrust his hopes of French finance. There had been large room for deception in the system of Neckar. It frenzied France. All was shewy, though all was unnatural. The formation of public confidence out of universal discredit, the an-

nouncement of solid funds extracted from coffers emptied by the fifty years' profligacy of Louis XV.; the laws of political nature reversed at the touch of a Genevese magician; all threw France into the rapture which she always feels at the exhibition of charlatanry. All was bright, artificial, and gay. The Farce came *before* the Tragedy. But the Tragedy came only the deeper. Half a century of change and anguish has passed, and the curtain has not yet fallen.

As a document of a state of things now almost forgotten, but worthy of perpetual remembrance,—and as a warning to all political speculators, if such men are to be warned, or are worth warning; the fallacies of Neckar must be quoted, even though they should involve a compliment to the sagacity of Lord North, and impeach the foresight of Burke himself.

"The Noble Lord in the blue ribbon," says Burke, last year treated all this with contempt. *He* never could conceive it possible that the French minister of finance could go through the year with a loan of but seventeen hundred thousand pounds, and that he should be able to find that loan without any tax. The second year, however, opens the very same scene. A small loan, a loan of no more than two millions five hundred thousand pounds, is to carry our enemies through the service of this year also. No tax is raised to fund that debt; no tax is raised for the current services. I am credibly informed there is no anticipation whatever. Compensations are correctly made, old debts continue to be sunk, as in the time of profound peace. Even

payments which their treasury had been authorized to suspend during the time of war, have not been suspended."

One of Neckar's contrivances for popularity was an attack on the expenses of the Crown. Even this attack shewed his deficiency in the requisites of a statesman. The Court had been undeniably wasteful, and nothing could be more deserving of restraint as a matter of public morals; but nothing could be less fitted for an experiment in finance. The little Republican banker could not discover that the expenditure of the Court was actually a boast to the nation. It was loudly exclaimed against, because this was a time when popular writers seized on exciting topics, and loved to lavish their eloquence on the vices of the great; while those writers, and every man in France besides, were practising the same vices to the full extent of their means. But the nation loved the shew, even at the expense; were proud of the superior splendours of their Court, and felt the pomps of the Tuileries an honour which raised every Frenchman in the eyes of Europe. A parsimonious Court in France must always be an ineffectual, scorned, and unpopular authority. But, in the time of Neckar, the personal vice, the grand objection to the former system, had almost wholly disappeared. Louis XVI. was as domestic a father of a family as any in Europe. The lopping and pruning system could only have impaired his means of individual benevolence, of kingly popularity, and of that strength which the distribution of wealth, and the attachment of its ex-

pectants gives to the Crown. But Neckar abolished the offices, and stopped the royal revenue. He thus shewed that he understood nothing of that popular feeling to which he bowed down. He went on in his career of meagre saving, and capacious ruin. The stoppage of the royal expenditure was instantly felt by thousands and tens of thousands, in their various shapes of artists, traders, architects, the whole multitude who wait on taste, fashion, and public ornament, in a land where display was, and will be for ever, the great business of existence. Thus discontent was the first fruits of the philosophic reform which was to make all men happy.

Then came Parisian bankruptcy. The *artistes*, supported no longer by the Court, and calling for their debts in vain to the courtiers who had been so summarily mulcted of their incomes, fell into ruin. Such was the next result of the measure which was to make Paris a bed of gold. Still, Neckar was to remain the presiding genius of French restoration. Yet, here, too, his hopes were equally fugitive. His changes rapidly began to turn the tide of public opinion against himself. The people grew sick of the perpetual saving that stripped them of their fêtes, and gave them nothing but the bankrupt list in their stead; the courtiers exclaimed, half in indignation and half in despair, against the charlatanry which had conjured away their emoluments; the King, weary of perpetual complaints, apprehensive of being deprived of all the power to which he had been accustomed, and unable to dis-

cover any more fortunate result of the solitude of his palace than the clamours of his people, found no consolation in the assurances of the Swiss banker, that all would be well in the course of twenty or thirty years! Political economy is a prodigious provider for the comforts of the future; it habitually pays the present generation by a draft on the unborn, and speculates upon the grave. The universal outcry at length turned upon the renovator himself, and Neckar was sent back to Geneva in disgrace; a fate which he bore, in the usual style of foreign magnanimity, with the most pitiful and pusillanimous dejection. He had thus, by the rashness of his projects, given the deathblow to all that they possessed of value; if he were a sincere patriot, he must have felt the bitterness of seeing his good extinguished by his folly; if his object were ambition, he only met the punishment which he merited. But this was an age of illusion, and the catastrophe was hidden for the time. Burke talks, with the copious grandeur of his style, of the regeneration of France.

"A general *reform*, executed through every department of the revenue, creates an annual income of more than half a million, while it facilitates and simplifies all the functions of administration. The *King's household*, at the remotest avenues to which all reformation has been hitherto stopped—that household which has been the stronghold of prodigality, the fortress which was never before attacked, has been not only not defended, but it has, even in the forms, been surrendered by the King to the economy of his Minister. No capitula-

tion, no reserve. Economy has entered in triumph into the public splendour of the monarch, into his private amusements, into the appointments of his highest and nearest relations. Economy and public spirit have made a beneficent and an honest spoil; they have plundered from extravagance and luxury, for the use of substantial service, a revenue of near four hundred thousand pounds. The reform of the finances, joined to the reform of the Court, gives to the public nine hundred thousand pounds a-year. The Minister who does these things is a great man. But the King who desires that they should be done is a far greater. We must do justice to our enemies. Those are the acts of a Patriot King. I am not in dread of the vast armies of France. I am not in dread of the gallant spirit of its brave and numerous nobility. I am not alarmed even at the great navy which has been so miraculously created. All those things Louis XIV. had before. With all those things the French monarchy has more than once fallen prostrate at the feet of the public faith of Great Britain. It was the want of public credit which disabled France from recovering after her defeats, or recovering even from her victories. It was a prodigal Court, it was an ill-ordered revenue, that sapped the foundations of all her greatness. Credit cannot exist under the arm of necessity."

But with these opinions, generated in his eager fancy, by the glow of French reform, his *principles* were not mingled. He felt with true sagacity, the nature of violent alterations at home. Of France he could know

little but from the descriptions of its enthusiasts. Of England, he knew all that was to be known by diligent enquiry, and concluded by profound intelligence. He thus gives his protest against legislation by the crowd, or for the crowd.

"As it is the interest of Government that reformation should be early, it is the interest of the people that it should be *temperate*. It is their interest, because a temperate reform is permanent, and because it has a principle of growth. Whenever we improve, it is right to leave room for a further improvement. It is right to consider, to look about us, to examine the effect of what we have done. Then we can proceed with confidence, because we can proceed with intelligence. Whereas in hot reformations,—in what men more zealous than considerate, call making clear work,—the whole is generally so crude, so harsh, so indigested, mixed with so much imprudence, and so much injustice, so contrary to the whole course of human nature and human institutions, that the very people who are most eager for it, are among the first to grow disgusted at what they have done. Then some part of the abdicated grievance is recalled from its exile, in order to become a corrective of the correction. Then the abuse assumes all the credit and popularity of a reform. A great part of my idea of a reform, is meant to operate gradually. We must no more make haste to be rich by parsimony, than by intemperate acquisition."

Several brief sketches of the history and purpose of

the royal and public establishments are admirably given: "*The Royal Household.* It is formed upon manners and customs that have long since expired. In the first place, it is formed, in many respects, upon feudal principles. In the feudal times it was not uncommon, even among subjects, for the lowest offices to be held by considerable persons, persons as unfit by their incapacity as improper by their rank, to occupy such employments. They were held by patent, sometimes for life, and sometimes by inheritance. If my memory does not deceive me, a person of no slight consideration held the office of patent hereditary cook to the Earl of Warwick. The Earl of Warwick's soups were, I fear, not the better for the dignity of his kitchen. I think it was an Earl of Gloucester who officiated as steward of the household to the Archbishop of Canterbury. There was some reason in ancient necessities for those ancient customs. Protection was wanted, and the domestic tie, though not the highest, was the closest."

The Board of Green Cloth still figures as the grand arbiter in all things relating to the hospitable expenditures of Royalty. Burke gives us the *rationale* of this old establishment. "The King's household has not only strong traces of feudality, but it is formed on the principles of a body corporate; it has its own magistrates, courts, and by-laws. This might be necessary in the ancient times, in order to have a government within itself capable of regulating the vast, and often unruly multitude, which composed and attended it.

This was the origin of the ancient court called the *Green Cloth*, composed of the Marshal, Treasurer, and other great officers of the household, with certain clerks. The rich subjects of the kingdom, who had formerly the same establishments, (only on a reduced scale,) have altered their economy. Their influence is lessened; but a mode of accommodation, and a style of splendour suitable to the manners of the times, has been increased. Royalty itself has insensibly followed, and the royal household has been carried away by the resistless tide of manners; but with this material difference—private men have got rid of the establishments, together with the reasons of them, whereas the royal household has lost all that was venerable and stately in the antique manners, without retrenching any thing of the cumbrous charge of a Gothic establishment. It is shrunk into the polished littleness of modern elegance and personal accommodation; it has evaporated from the gross concrete into an essence and rectified spirit of expense. You have tuns of ancient pomp in a vial of modern luxury."

After those general observations, he colours the topic with that pencil which he dipt in every hue of frolic and fancy. "When the reason of old establishments is gone, it is absurd to preserve nothing but the burden of them. This is superstitiously to embalm a carcass not worth an ounce of the gums that are used to preserve it. It is to burn precious oils in the tomb; it is to offer meat and drink to the dead. Our palaces are vast inhospitable halls. There the bleak winds—

there ' Boreas, and Eurus, and Caurus, and Argestes loud,' howling through the vacant lobbies, and clattering the doors of deserted guard-rooms, appal the imagination, and conjure up the grim spectres of departed tyrants; the Saxon, the Norman, and the Dane—the stern Edwards and fierce Henrys, who stalk from desolation to desolation through the dreary vacuity and melancholy succession of chill and comfortless chambers. When this tumult subsides, a dead silence would reign in this desert, if every now and then the tacking of hammers did not announce, that those constant attendants upon all courts in all ages, jobs, were still alive, for whose sake alone it is, that any trace of ancient grandeur is suffered to remain. Those palaces are a true emblem of some governments; the inhabitants are decayed, but the governors and magistrates still flourish. They put me in mind of *Old Sarum*, where the representatives, more in number than the constituents, only serve to inform us, that this was once a place of trade, and sounding with the busy hum of men, though now we can trace the streets only by the colour of the corn, and its sole manufacture is in members of Parliament."

The rapidity of movement, which is always affected by candidates for the favour of the multitude, never found an advocate in Burke's philosophy. In alluding even to the obnoxious subject of the sinecures attached to the Exchequer, and admiting the fitness of curtailing their profits where they had grown too large, he shrinks from their too sudden extirpation. " The na-

ture of their profits, which grow out of the public distress, is, in itself, invidious and grievous. But, I fear, that Reform cannot be immediate. Those places and others of the same kind, which are held for life, have been considered as property. They have been given as a provision for children, they have been the subject of family settlements, they have been the security of creditors. *What the law respects, shall be sacred to me.* If the barriers of law should be broken down, upon ideas of convenience, even of public convenience, we shall no longer have any thing certain among us. If the discretion of power is once let loose upon property, we can be at no loss to determine whose power, and what discretion, will prevail at last. * * * * * The mere time of the reform is by no means worth the sacrifice of a principle of law. Individuals pass like shadows, but the commonwealth is fixed and stable. The difference, therefore, of to-day and to-morrow, which to private people is immense, to the State is nothing. * * * * * Those things which are not practicable are not desirable. There is nothing in the world really beneficial, that does not lie within the reach of an informed understanding, and a well-directed pursuit. There is nothing that God has judged good for us, that he has not given us the means to accomplish, in both the natural and the moral world. If we cry, like children, for the moon, like children we must cry on."

This memorable speech was delivered on the 11th of February, 1780. It excited great admiration in the

House, and universal applause outside the walls. The bills brought in in consequence, were argued diligently, clause by clause, during March, April, and May. But in the end the motion met its natural fate. Opposition had probably used it, from the beginning, more as a means of assault than an object of success. Its popularity was of importance to them; yet its triumph might have been distasteful. A measure which stripped all administrations of so large a share of patronage, could not be ardently supported by men who hourly expected to seat themselves on the Ministerial throne. The battle soon began to be fought more languidly. The clause for abolishing the third Secretaryship of State was lost by a majority of seven. Within a short period the leading clauses followed its fate, and the bill died away.

CHAPTER VI.

Public Opinion of the Speech— On Œconomical Reform—Eloquence of Public Men—Burke retires from Bristol—Fine Sketch of Howard—The Borough System—Crabbe the Poet—Character of Fox—Modern Whiggism.

The object of Opposition was fully obtained by the celebrity of the attempt. It had given them a cheap opportunity of declaring their patriotism; it had enlisted the popular cry on their side; and pledging them to nothing but an indefinite zeal, and an impracticable purification, it gave party all the advantage of promises never to be performed, and virtues which cost them only words. Burke was probably sincere. He was an enthusiast. His poetic ardour dazzled himself, he saw nothing in the universal clearance of corruption, as it was termed, but the restoration of an age of political righteousness. His friends, generally profligate in their private lives, and abandoned in their political views,—philosophers and patriots when out of place; rash, tyrannical, and corrupt when in,—were rejoiced to find so unsuspicious a pleader for their cause. But the sequel shewed, how little they had in common with the loftiness and magnanimity of his mind. In the

brief success, which at once raised them to power, and stamped the name of the Coalition with eternal ignominy; their great champion was almost totally neglected. His virtue was not to be trusted with the subtleties of the Cabinet; he had exhibited a simplicity of principle fit only to be scoffed at by political gamesters; he was characterised as too wrongheaded to take persuasion from his palm; and, accordingly, he was thrust into a subordinate office, which only reluctance to seem craving for power prevented him from rejecting;—the banner which had waved so richly before them in the battle, prophetic of victory, was folded up and flung into a corner, until the time when they should again be forced to the field. But if the insulted statesman could be recompensed by national admiration, his speech brought him an almost endless harvest of praise. Parliament, the people, all Europe, received it with boundless applause. "The speech which has been delivered this night," exclaimed Dunning, of all critics the most cautious, and of all admirers the most reluctant, "must remain as a monument to be handed down to posterity, of the honourable member's uncommon zeal, unrivalled industry, astonishing abilities, and invincible perseverance. He had undertaken a task big with labour and difficulty, a task that embraced a variety of the most important, extensive, and complicated objects. Yet such were the unequalled abilities, so extraordinary the talents and ingenuity, and such the fortunate frame of the honourable gentleman's mind, his vast capacity and happy conception,

that, in his hands, what must have proved a vast heap of ponderous matter, composed of heterogeneous ingredients, discordant in their nature and opposite in principle, was so skilfully arranged, as to become quite simple as to each respective part, and the whole at the same time so judiciously combined, as to present nothing to almost any mind tolerably intelligent, to divide, puzzle, or distract it."

This opinion was echoed and re-echoed through the country; all expressed their delight and astonishment at the unexampled combination of eloquence, labour, and perseverance, displayed on the Bill. Even the slow good-will of those whose emoluments he had placed in hazard was not refused to this fine performance; they acknowledged the glitter of the lance which pierced them. Like the knights of old, if they must yield, their defeat was alleviated by the rank and prowess of the chieftain to whom they surrendered. Gibbon, then one of the Board of Trade, the only establishment which the speech succeeded in extinguishing; and succeeded, probably, only through the Minister's previous determination to get rid of an encumbrance; gave his tribute in his own formal yet forcible style, "Mr Burke's reform bill was framed with skill, introduced with eloquence, and supported by numbers. Never can I forget the delight with which that diffusive and ingenious orator was heard by all sides of the House, and even by *those whose existence he proscribed.*"

The labour to which he submitted on this occasion

can be conceived only by those who have known the difficulties through which public documents at this period were attainable; the infinite confusion of the national records; the quick jealousies of official persons; the perplexity of the documents themselves, and the general incrustation of time, change, obscurity, and obsoleteness, from which they were to be cleared. By nothing less than indefatigable diligence could even this have been effected; but to render the obscure plain, to give interest to the dull, to concentrate the whole mass of detail, confusion, and commonplace, into spirit and splendour, was the work of genius alone.

Still the speech has obvious faults, in a critical point of view. Gibbon's epithet, of *diffusive*, is its true censure. The exordium is too long. The Orator treads too tenderly, and too tardily, on his ground. No advantages of caution can compensate for the feeling of disappointment with which hearers, longing for facts, find themselves compelled to listen to theorems.—The placeman, anxious for the safety of his office, and the patriot, eager to commence the work of renovation, must have equally desired to see the Orator enter upon his detail, and been equally repelled by the long review of abstract principles, marshalled with whatever skill, and illustrated with whatever brilliancy.

Even the powerful knowledge and rich imagination of Burke, embarrassed his effect in Parliament. He could not prevail on himself to discover the injury, which is done to a cause by giving his hearers credit for too much taste, feeling, or knowledge. He over-

whelmed dull men with imagery which would have "lapped a poet in Elysium;" he flashed wit upon purblind eyes; he drew up the treasures of philosophy from their deepest depths, and poured them out before the men of the counting-house. He called "spirits from the vasty deep," and displayed all the creations and lustres of a mind master of all the magic of eloquence, before a crowd, who thought only of their dinners and the division.

Yet in thus speaking of Burke, we would not be understood to depreciate in the slightest degree one of the most extraordinary leaders of the British mind. He wanted nothing for perfection as an orator, but the habit of public business. No man could devote himself to labour with a more gigantic perseverance; none could study the details, or master the substance, of public affairs with a more nervous and comprehensive sagacity; but it was the sagacity of the closet. He there prepared his armour calmly, sedulously, magnificently. He came into the field conspicuous at once to all eyes, but his lavish grandeur often encumbered him, in the various and desultory encounters through which final victory is to be alone purchased in the British House of Parliament. Yet, those were chiefly the faults of his position. As an assailant he was always allowed to choose his ground. If Burke had been a *Minister*, he would have been forced into discipline, he must have rapidly learned to throw aside the gold-studded and richly figured weapons which embarrassed the facility of his movements,—his style

might have been wrought into the ready vigour, the easy activity, and the pungent force which owes all things to its point and penetration.

The great failure of modern public speaking has been this want of pungency. The stately expansion of Pitt's style often wearied his hearers; the measureless confusion of Fox's preambles as often tried the understanding till it shrank from the task. Canning's clearness, lightness, and elegance, at all times delighted the House; but he purchased those graceful qualities in debate by a singular want of passion, a superficiality which was obvious through all his efforts to appear profound, and a perpetual study of pleasantry, which, often successful as it was, and admirable as it is, in due subserviency to higher qualities; is, of all the attributes of the orator, the most delicate to manage, and the most difficult to reconcile with depth, dignity, or impression. Of all the eminent speakers of the last century, but two seem to have possessed poignancy, in the effective sense of the word— Chatham in England, and Grattan in Ireland. It placed them both at the head of public eloquence in their countries, and placed them at such a height of superiority, that no man thought of rivalling, or scarcely of imitating, either. Their faults were palpable, but their excellencies placed a measureless distance between them and all of their day. Of Chatham few relics have been left; his monument is in the boundless admiration of his time. Yet the *Torso* of his eloquence still shews the noble proportions of the original. Grattan has left abundant memorials of him-

self; and mingled as they are with the unhappy politics which turn the blood of Ireland to fever in every age, and alloyed by the vexed spirit of disappointed partisanship, they yet embody some of the most powerful conceptions in the most vivid language ever forged in the fiery mind of impassioned oratory.

The loss of the Bill had been foreseen; the party were satisfied with its production, and its author was consoled by its praise. It passed away to the usual oblivion of popular projects found to be impracticable. The riots of 1780 called forth Burke again. The bitterness of Opposition was not to be restrained by the imminent danger of the country. Burke, disdaining this criminal selfishness, and seeing nothing in the riots but the strong probability of their laying London in ashes, advised his friends to join with the Government in a manly and generous effort to put down the evil. But this was only an additional evidence to the declamatory race round him, how little he was fit for the statesmanship of their school. On this occasion he displayed alike his personal fearlessness and his humanity; the former, by venturing into the streets among the rioters while they were in the act of surrounding the House of Commons; the latter, by writing a number of letters to the Chancellor and other leading persons when the riots were suppressed, imploring that mercy might be shewn to the utmost practicable extent. The recommendation was probably effective; for the punishments were few, and those, almost solely of the leading rioters.

In the midst of this accumulation of public business, the Slave-trade had become an anxious and ardent object of Burke's humanity. Six years before Mr Wilberforce brought forward his first motion, Burke had formed a plan for the general alleviation of the trade; had drawn up a negro code, and formed regulations for the milder government of the slaves in the Islands.

But he had begun to feel his vocation for higher things. His constituents at Bristol, tired of being represented by the ablest man in Europe, had formed their determination to get rid of him, and it had been put in force without ceremony. One of the charges against a senator, who spent every hour in the House of Commons, was, "that he had not visited Bristol frequently." Burke was indignant at this fickleness, but he disdained to express his feelings by more than grave remonstrance. "Gentlemen," said he, "I do not stand before you, accused of venality, or of neglect of duty. It is not said, that in the long period of my service, I have in a single instance sacrificed the slightest of your interests to my ambition or my fortune. It is not alleged, that to gratify any anger or revenge of my own, or my party, I have had a share in wronging or oppressing any description of men, or any man in any description. No; the charges against me are all of one kind, that I have pushed the principles of general justice and benevolence too far, farther than a cautious policy would warrant, and farther than the opinions of many men would go with me. In every accident that may happen through life, in pain, in sor-

row, in depression, in distress, I will call to mind this accusation and be comforted."

It was in his address to his constituents, who were to be his constituents no more, that, in alluding to some efforts of his own for the relief of small debtors, he drew the famous sketch of Howard. "I cannot name this gentleman, without remarking, that his labours and writings have done much to open the eyes and hearts of mankind. He has visited all Europe; not to survey the sumptuousness of palaces, nor the stateliness of temples; not to make accurate measurements of the remains of ancient grandeur, nor to form a scale of the curiosity of modern arts; not to collect or collate manuscripts; but to dive into the depths of dungeons, to plunge into the infection of hospitals, to survey the mansions of sorrow and pain, to take the guage and dimension of misery, depression and contempt; to remember the forgotten, to attend to the neglected, to visit the forsaken, and to compare and collate the distresses of all men in all countries. His plan is original, and it is as full of genius as it is of humanity. It is a voyage of discovery, a circumnavigation of charity. Already the benefit of his labours is more or less felt in every country. I hope he will anticipate its final reward by seeing all its effects fully realized in his own."

A new period now commenced in the life of Burke; Lord North, broken down by the attacks of Opposition, resigned, (March 19, 1782.) Fox became virtual Premier, the Marquis of Rockingham nominal

Premier, and in the general distribution of office, Burke was appointed Paymaster-General of the Forces, and made a Privy Counsellor, but *without* a seat in the Cabinet.

Burke's loss of the representation of Bristol affords a practical lesson of the utter unfitness of the multitude to decide on the merits of public men. If it had depended on the principle of that multitudinous voting, which is the fantasy of our day, Burke would probably never have found his way into Parliament again; and England would have lost the services of one of the most illustrious individuals that ever adorned her Senate. His narrow fortune would have been inadequate to the expenses of a contested election; his directness of opinion must have rendered him obnoxious to the capricious tastes of the crowd; and his sensibility of spirit would have disdained to stoop to the humiliations which form the substance of popularity. He never again attempted a popular election. The Borough of Malton sent him to Parliament for the remainder of his life; and, much more receiving than giving honour by the choice, put to shame the mob-ridden city which had so rashly rejected him.

The Borough System is now no more, and in future no man whose humility of fortune, or integrity of heart, shrinks from the expense, and the degradation, of popular canvass, can hope for a seat in Parliament. Whether corruption has been extinguished, or has only changed hands; whether the purchase of a bo-

rough, or the purchase of a mob be the purer transaction; are topics which may be safely left to common judgment, and to the Bribery Committees which have since flourished in such luxuriance. But the change which Whiggism in power always panegyrized—and always eluded; was offered to it as the purchase of office. The offer was irresistible; and it was embraced, in its fulness of dishonesty and danger. By the new system the struggle is not between the People and the Peerage, for what struggle can subsist between an aristocracy stripped of every vote in the Commons, and the masters of the Commons? The true contest is between the populace and the elected; and the only question is, whether we shall have representatives of the nation, or the delegates of the mob? The course of such a contest is easily foreseen. The mob, at this hour, deny to their representatives any other character than that of delegates. Pledge or not pledge, they look upon them as equally bound. In a few years, custom will take the shape of Law. Every member of the House will have but one point of view; the verdict of the crowd. The question that faces him at all points of the political horizon must be—What will the populace think of this; how shall I excuse myself to my masters in the streets; how shall I secure my next election in the mouths of the multitude? Thus the pyramid will be completely inverted. The course of national council must begin thenceforth with the club, and end with the Legislature. The

habit of submitting to the popular outcry must grow with the growth of the system, until democracy is the established principle of legislation, and to deliberate upon a proposition of the mob, becomes *lèse-majesté* to the regenerated constitution. While the Peerage-Members of the Commons subsisted, they partook in some degree of the stability which makes the chief value of the Peerage; nearly independent of popular influence, they were not constrained to veer about with every breath of popular caprice; connected with the property of the land, they naturally resisted the violences with which the democratic feeling in all legislatures threatens property; naturally conversant with the opinions of the higher orders, they brought to the debate a consideration for authority, a soberness of view, an educated and established dislike of useless innovation, and a respect for the principles by which British greatness had been erected; all of the highest value for the purposes of sound legislation. But this class has been almost totally extinguished, and the vessel of the State has been deprived of one of the securest of her anchors.

And, what is the actual working of the system even in its first trials? It has paralysed the Government, it has made the acceptance of office a terror to every honest man; it has shaken every institution of the country; it has raised radicalism to the rank of the supreme principle of representation; and after having given to the British nation such Parliaments as it never saw before, sits in judgment even upon the Parliaments of

its own favouritism, and in the most daring terms threatens the land with utter anarchy.*

* The present state of the representation in Great Britain and Ireland will be the clearest evidence of the formidable growth of this new authority.

England.—In England, 40 counties return 144 members, the number of registered voters in 1832 being 344,564. Cities and boroughs, amounting to 185, return 227 members; the number of registered voters in 1832 being 274,649. Total, 471 members, and 619,213 voters.

Wales.—In Wales, 12 counties return 15 members, the number of registered voters in 1832 being 25,815; 14 districts of boroughs return 14 members, the number of registered voters in 1832 being 11,309. Total 29 members, and 37,124 voters.

Scotland.—In Scotland, 30 counties return 30 members, the number of registered voters in 1832 being 33,114; 76 cities and boroughs return 23 members, the number of registered voters in 1832 being 31,332. Total, 53 members and 64,446 voters.

Ireland.—In Ireland, 32 counties return 64 members, the number of registered voters in 1832 being 60,607; 34 cities and boroughs return 41 members, the number of registered voters in 1832 being 31,545. Total, 105 members and 92,152 voters.

Thus in Great Britain, while the members for counties are but 189, the members for cities and boroughs are 364! The case is stronger still with respect to England, the most influential portion of all; there the county members being scarcely more than one-half of the members for the town, or 144 to 227. But even this view hardly shews the extent of the hazard. The population of the counties but slowly increases, while that of the towns is accumulating with hourly rapidity; the county population is, from its nature, nearly stagnant in point of political impulses, while the town population is perpetually excited to political movements, is constantly employed in speculations on public affairs, and from its habits of trade and manufacture, and its closer state of intercourse and communication, possesses tenfold the applicable power, political excitability, and condensed force of the remaining population.

It is among the remarkable circumstances of this great man's career, that, though the acknowledged leader of his party, indispensable to their public existence, and apparently in the very flood of fortune, no public personage ever gained less for himself. From the beginning to the close, he was poor; and though inheriting nearly L. 20,000, was so much assailed by the distresses of others, and so much pressed by the necessary expenses of that style of living, which, by his political rank, he was compelled to adopt, that his life seems to have been the very reverse of affluent. Yet reluctant as he was to apply for himself, he could be an active suitor for others, to whom he was attached merely by a sense of their merits. During his stay at a friend's house, he had been struck with the intelligence and manners of a neighbouring curate, and expressed a wish that it might, at some future time, be in his power to serve a man of his ability. A few years after, the rector died, and the curate applied to Burke for his interest with the Prince of Wales, the patron of the living. Burke immediately replied, that from his slight personal intercourse with the Prince, he could have but little certainty in any application; but that if the clergyman would write a letter, he would present it himself to his Royal Highness. The letter was written, was presented, and the request was instantly granted. Burke, good-naturedly pleased with the success of his mission, expressed himself with his usual richness of conception, on the good which thus lay in the hands of persons of high station, on the

means of royal popularity, and the extensive happiness that might result from royal virtues. At last perceiving that he was flowing into dissertation, he checked himself, and begged pardon for this intrusion on royal patience. "No apologies, my dear sir," said the Prince, familiarly laying his hand upon his shoulder; "from your lessons we must all learn wisdom; it is only to be regretted that so few imitate your candour."

Another anecdote of his good-natured interference alludes to Crabbe, the late powerful, though harsh, describer of common and country life. The poet, who had early felt in himself the materials of fame, travelled to London from his curacy with a volume of verse, to make his fortune at once. But he had unluckily brought with him but *three pounds*. In default of a publisher, he ventured to print the volume at his own expense, and it may be presumed that the bard's three pounds did not go far. The press would move no longer. The next expedient was, to dedicate the poems to a noble Lord, from whose gratitude for this signal favour of Parnassus some return in the more vulgar material of patronage might be expected. But the noble Lord, who probably had offers of similar honours on his table every day, omitted all notice of the dedication; and the poet's hopes sank again. It is painful to believe, that distress more real than the loss of fame now began to involve a man of true talent. He was driven to extremity, and at last, utterly unable to extricate himself by his own means, the thought occurred of applying to Burke. He had no personal

knowledge of him, no introduction, no intermediate friend. But he wrote a detail of his circumstances, which, coming from the graphic pen of so strange a describer of the sufferings of others, may be presumed to have been forcible, where the sufferings were his own; and saying, that he was prompted to this step in the instance of so eminent a person, by "knowing that he was a great man, and believing that he was a good one," he waited the result, with natural, and extreme anxiety. Burke, both a great and a good man, did not fail the poet; he answered his application immediately, assisted him in all possible ways, promoted a subscription for his work, and introduced him to a circle of friends, who became the origin of his fortune; his fame was the work of his own hands.

There is a period in every man's life when his frame and his principles alike seem to settle;—the bodily change, from the exuberant vigour and restlessness of youth to maturity, yet without the approach of decay; —the mental change, from the eager and unsettled ardour of first views, to the deliberate and vigorous fixedness of ripened opinion. Burke had entered public life under the name of Whiggism. But the Whiggism of the Rockingham party was calmness and dignity itself to the headlong association with the popular sentiment which characterised the subsequent leaders of the name. The Marquis of Rockingham was the emblem of his party, an old noble, with the very spirit of aristocracy, claiming the right to govern by the right of birth; adopting office as a natural privilege of

rank, and regarding the honours of the State as much the legitimate possession of the great families, as the arms on their carriages. There might have been something too feudal in this assumption; there might even be some ground for ridicule in this full-dress and stiffened system of conducting the vast and fluctuating business of a great State; there might even be some unsuitable hauteur which repelled men of inferior birth, or some injurious tardiness in the movements of those embroidered and formal figures in times of public emergency. Yet the good strongly predominated over the evil. The administration of public affairs was conducted on a manly, large, and high-born principle. The dynasty of Clerks had not yet degraded the natural dignity of British politics; the high manners of the individual gave a character to all his proceedings, influenced the habits of all who looked up to him for direction, and stamped something of nobility on the whole form of the public transactions of England.

Fox was the leader of the second period. Recklessly ambitious, vehement in the right, and in the wrong; notoriously licentious in private life, and, by *inevitable consequence*, wholly unprincipled in public; always grasping at the success of the moment without the slightest consideration of the price which was to be paid for his victory; he constantly exhibited the most extraordinary perversion of the most extraordinary powers. Sophistical, with the appearance of perfect simplicity; artificial, with a constant pretension of

openness; always pronouncing dogmas worthy of an ancient sage, yet always practising them with the laxity of a political libertine; professing in speeches worthy of immortal remembrance, the most passionate love for the glory of England, yet always exalting her enemies at her expense, palliating their injustice, cheering their aggressions, and panegyrizing their Rebellion; Fox was the natural representative, as he had been the creator, of his faction. History will look to him as the embodying of that mixture of violence and compromise, of profligate ambition, and no less profligate flexibility, of hereditary contempt for the people, and time-serving worship of the populace, which forms the character of modern Whiggism.

Yet our day was to see it sink lower still. For even Fox preserved some impress of his earlier rank. The task of mingling with riot was still a task to him; if he stooped to the populace of Westminster, or harangued the inflated vulgarity of the feasters at the Crown and Anchor, it was "by compulsion and laborious flight" that he plunged so low; his element was not there, and no man rejoiced more when this ungenial toil was done, and he found himself once again in the accomplished and high-mannered circles among which he was born. Coriolanus asking for "the most sweet voices" of the Roman rabble, never felt a keener pang of his patrician dignity, than the great leader of Opposition, divesting himself of his Court habiliments, to meet his *sans culotte* confederates at the Covent-Garden hustings.

He was now beginning to practise those powerful but rash conceptions which finally shaped his historical character—a desperate appeal to the clamours of the day; an unmitigable determination to seize the highest rank, let the means be what they might; and the original headlong propensity of a singularly vigorous and vivid, but loose and irregular mind, to measures whose profligacy was to be forgotten in their success. Burke's more composed intellect, and sounder principles, started back from this precipitate career. Fox had been his pupil, and political favourite; but the time was come, when the young Phaeton was to seize the reins alone, and commit himself to that fiery and erratic course which nothing but a still more powerful hand could have restrained from setting the empire in a blaze.

The first intimation of a difference in the views of those distinguished men had been in a debate on the Marriage Act, in 1781. Fox had assailed the act in his usual spirit,—on the particular ground of the aversion shewn by the Duke of Richmond's family to his mother's marriage. Burke had defended it also in his usual spirit,—on the general ground of its value to society in England, on its practical uses, and its direct reference to the *facts* of the national character. On this occasion, he proceeded to answer some of the charges which had been floating through the political circles. "I am accused," said he, "I am told, abroad, of being a man of aristocratic principles. If by aristocracy they mean the Peers, I have no vulgar admiration nor vulgar antipathy towards them. I hold

their order in cold and decent respect. I hold them to be of *absolute necessity* in the Constitution. But I think they are good only when kept within proper bounds. If by the aristocracy, which indeed comes nearer to the point, they mean an adherence to the rich and powerful against the poor and weak, this would indeed be a very extraordinary part. I have incurred the odium of gentlemen in this House, for not paying sufficient regard to men of ample property. When indeed the smallest rights of the poorest people are in question, I would set my face against any act of pride and power countenanced by the highest that are in it. And if it should come to the last extremity, and to a contest of blood, my part is taken; I should take my fate with the poor and low and feeble.

"But if those people come to turn their liberty into a cloak of maliciousness, and to seek a privilege of exemption not from power, but from the rules of morality and virtuous discipline, then I would join my hand to make them feel the force which a few, united in a good cause, have over a multitude of the profligate and ferocious."

Yet the event was still distant which was to separate the leaders of Opposition for ever. On the amendment to the address moved by Fox, touching the right of taxing America, November, 1781, Burke supported him, in a powerful speech on the absurdity of claiming a right, where the right was impracticable. In this he introduced the strong apostrophe which was so long recorded, as the *shearing of the wolf.*

"But I must say a few words on the subject of those rights which have cost us so much, and which were likely to cost us our all. What were those rights? Can any man give them a body and soul, a tangible substance? We did all this because we had a right to do it! And all this we dared to do, because we dared.

"We had a right to tax America, says the Noble Lord, and as we had a right, we must do it. We must risk every thing, forfeit every thing, take no consideration into view but our right, nor measure our right with our power. Infatuated Ministers! not to know that right signifies nothing without might, and that the claim, without the power of enforcing it, is nugatory and idle in the copyhold of rival States. But, says a silly man, full of his prerogative of dominion over a few beasts of the field, there is excellent wool on the back of the wolf, and therefore he must be sheared. What, shear a wolf! Yes; but will he comply? Have you considered the trouble? How will you get this wool? Oh, I have considered nothing, and will consider nothing but my right. A wolf is an animal that has wool; all animals that have wool are to be shorn; and therefore, I will shear the wolf. This was just the reasoning used by the Minister."

The principle for which Burke contended here was unquestionably true; for, a right being given for a beneficial purpose, the right which confers no such purpose loses its essential property, and ought to be abandoned at once. But, it is to be remembered, that the

inability to enforce a right, neither extinguishes its existence, nor exonerates those by whom it is resisted. But the Ministry were paralysed at home by the perpetual attacks of their opponents. The general feebleness with which victory abroad was followed up, and the slackness with which defeat was repaired, made the war a mere matter of calculation between the budget of the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the coffer of the United States. The capture of Cornwallis, unwarned by the failure of Burgoyne, and without his palliatives; at length, turned the whole tide of national scorn on the Ministry. Every division in the House was thenceforth a new death-wound. General Conway's motion for finishing the war was lost by only one, (Feb. 22.) A vote of censure by Lord John Cavendish next threatened their personal safety. Finally, after a succession of violent attacks, Lord North came down to the House with an announcement that he had delivered the seals of office into his Majesty's hands, (19th March, 1782.) Opposition was now triumphant; the party prepared to divide the spoil; and the most boastful, most deeply pledged, and most popular Ministry that England had seen for a hundred years, began their reign;—to be extinguished in the shortest space ever known, to disappoint every expectation, to fall into fragments, and to remain in political exile for a quarter of a century!

CHAPTER VII.

Fox, the leader of the Ministry—Death of Rockingham—Pitt Minister—The Coalition—The India Bill—New Era of Europe—Grattan's opinion of Burke.

THE contrast between the Ministerial system of England and those of foreign countries, is one of the most striking characteristics of European government. France, now nearly republicanised, has lately become still more fluctuating than England; but the other leading Powers of the Continent seldom know a change of Ministry but by death. The Monarch and his Minister carry on the sluggish machinery of irresponsible government together, until time puts a stop to both Monarch and Minister; and the machine is to be thenceforth wound up by two other individuals under the same relation, equally unquestioned by the country; running their course side by side with the same uniformity, and finally giving up their location to two successors as like themselves as possible. But in England, political life is a lottery, in which the Cabinet is the grand prize of the wheel. It is equally characteristic that the Government becomes more difficult as the country becomes more at its ease.

War *may* try the Cabinet; but peace is proverbial for the fluctuation of authority. The bold hazards and brilliant achievements of war turn the public eye exclusively to the field. The Minister is then simply a recruiting officer, a commissary, a pay-master. His diplomacy is the art of supplying the Quartermaster-General, and the first-fruits of his Cabinet Councils are the concoction and publication of Gazettes. But peace brings back the true time of trial. The people are urged to pry into Ministerial conduct. Party watches every step, not to reclaim the error of Ministerial ways, but to seize on Ministerial power. Politicians grow weary of the monotony of an unchanged Ministry, and the Cabinet is either suddenly stricken with decay for the benefit of its antagonists, or gradually absorbs the more active portion of the opposition principle, until its identity is lost, its creed is changed, the world grows sick of its negativeness, and the miscellany of "All the Talents" becomes as suddenly abhorred as the popular tongue can find utterance for its zeal against the abomination. It falls amid a general outcry, and another steps over its body to the throne.

All common sense is in favour of the possession of power by the opulent, the highly educated, and the highly born. The English are a people of common sense, and the national feeling is therefore Toryism. Men of great ability may spring from the lower ranks at intervals; but when ardour is united with understanding, and understanding with honesty, the aspirant

becomes a Tory at the first moment he has reached that position in which it becomes safe for him to acknowledge his sentiments. Let him still bear what name he will, he is essentially a supporter of the rank into which he has fought his way; he feels the value of hereditary distinctions as keenly as if his coronet had been worn since the Heptarchy; he is a friend to the security of property; he acknowledges the subordination of society; and, satisfied that our forefathers had at least as much sense, honour, and national dignity as their sons, desires only to see those ancient and British principles maintained, by which every man was suffered to follow his own industry in peace; the violence of innovation and the severity of prerogative were equally restrained; and England grew to be the noblest, most powerful, and freest nation of the world.

The Rockingham name once again at the head of an administration, Fox became a placeman, to his own infinite gratification. The Whig party, on this occasion, were instantly transformed into Tories. The touch of the Treasury bench had wrought the miracle at once; and while the Marquis, in right of name and experience, became the declared head of the Government, Charles Fox, in right of blood, connexion, and habitual association with the highest rank, became the leader of the House of Commons. Burke, for ten years the great champion of the party, gave way—probably no reluctant way—to the claims of the son of Lord Holland, and the relative of some of the principal families of the Empire. An Irishman, the

son of a man in obscure life, with but little fortune, with no English connexion, and sustained above the crowd by nothing but talents of the most distinguished order, was no rival, in the eyes of the English aristocracy, to a young, daring, and accomplished member of their own order; full of all the virtues, and even the vices, which create popularity in a high-wrought state of society; attracting public admiration by the display of remarkable ability; delighting private life by equally remarkable pleasantry and social manners; familiar with all the good and evil of mankind; equally powerful in his address to the reason of the House and the absurdity of the hustings; affecting the stern politics of an Algernon Sydney or a Cato Major, while he exhibited the loose practice of a Rochester or a Sylla; breaking down whatever impediment to the hearts of the populace might have existed in the abstract dignity of the great politician, by the easy profligacy with which he shared in the license of all classes alike; at once the gamester, the horse-racer, the libertine, and the most weighty, prompt, and vigorous debater that the House of Commons had ever seen; all combining to render him, in a sense applicable to no other public individual of his century, at once the man of power and the man of the people.

The distribution of office on this occason allows of no panegyric on Whig gratitude. Lord Shelburne was placed at the head of the Home Department, for which Burke's local knowledge, indefatigable intelli-

gence, and zeal for national improvement, made him the fittest man in the empire.

He was evidently circumvented in the new arrangements. A plausible story seems to have been told to him, of the necessity of making room for some of the King's friends; the embarrassments of the Ministry were pleaded; and this man, who was entitled to command all that office could give, was thrown by with the Paymaster-Generalship. The office was lucrative, but that its lucre was not the temptation in his instance is clear, from his efforts to lower the expenditure of the office, and curtail those emoluments which by custom had been looked upon as the right of the Paymaster. The balance in the official hands had seldom amounted to less than a million, and the power of dealing with it had become the privilege of the chief officer. The clothing of the Chelsea pensioners alone had been a profit of L. 700 a-year; this he equally gave up to the public, the whole forming a saving of L. 47,000 a-year, of which L. 25,300 had been the established profits of the head of the department. Those profits were doubtless enormous, but they had been sanctioned by time; and Burke, a poor man, and without any hope of a secure income, deserves, for his surrender of them, all the praise that can be given to self-denial.

But, the Rockingham Administration was not made to last. The evident propensity of Fox to suffer no sharer of the supremacy to which he was rapidly advancing, must have roused discontent. His eagerness

to be felt as a bold innovator, and the jealousy with which his impracticable theories inspired the graver members of the Ministry, prohibited all unity in the Cabinet; and a secret but powerful cause of his fall existed in the royal aversion. Pitt, then rising into fame,—Shelburne, crafty, ambitious, and a favourite at Court,—the King, to whom the hauteur of the Marquis and his domineering party was an offence, altogether formed a mass of repugnancy, which must have soon broken down the rude, hasty, and ill-cemented fabric of administration. But a dictator more rapid than party, and more irresistible than kings, now interposed. The Premier was seized with an illness, (which fifty years ago was named the *influenza*,) and suddenly died, (1782.) While the party were in the confusion naturally arising from this unexpected circumstance, the prize was seized by Lord Shelburne. The Secretary of the Home Department left his friends to wonder at his audacity, and their own defeat; flung Fox, Burke, Townshend, and all the leaders loose, and announced himself the master of a new administration. Time, which developes the secrets of Cabinets as well as of men, has explained the chief ground of this extraordinary overthrow, by the King's displeasure. It has been subsequently observed, that artless as undoubtedly was the mind of George III., and incapable as his manly and honest spirit was of threading the mazes of political intrigue, no Cabinet against which he pronounced his displeasure was ever long-lived. The King had submitted to the Rockingham

Cabinet, as an usurpation; having previously offered the treasury to Lord Shelburne, and on his refusal yielding only to necessity. A second opening was now made, and he availed himself of it instantly. The appointment of William Pitt as Chancellor of the Exchequer, at an age scarcely beyond boyhood, was the most striking feature of the change; and proudly and powerfully did that greatest of English statesmen vindicate the promise of his early years, and the predilection of the Empire for his name. Fox was indignant at his defeat, and haughtily rejected an offer to receive him into the new Cabinet. The negotiator was Pitt, but the condition being that Lord Shelburne should remain at the head of the Treasury, the interview was abortive, and the exiled party were driven to one of those fatal expedients which belong to politicians made for misfortune. A combination, which the Ministers called a conspiracy, and which has been stigmatized to all posterity by the name of *the Coalition*, was formed by Fox with Lord North. The Ministry were thrown out by a motion condemning the peace, (21st February, 1783,) and Opposition became once more masters of the Cabinet. But, the public wrath knew no bounds at this desperate defiance of common honesty. Every man who had borne a share in it, was marked for a degree of contempt never excited before by public tergiversation. With whom it originated is still doubtful, unless Mr Eden, afterwards Lord Auckland, is to be considered as its author. But all the leading men of the party, Lord John Townshend, Lord Loughborough,

Sheridan, Colonel Fitzpatrick, &c. were indignantly charged with various parts in the transaction. Yet, the weight of public indignation fell upon Fox, whose sinking his pledges to "bring the noble Lord in the blue riband to the block," in the sentimental declaration, that "his enmities were momentary, but his friendships eternal," was so far from conciliating public opinion; that it was pronounced to be only an aggravated offence of the intriguer. It had been at once a strong proof of the heats of the times, and of the uncontrollable rashness of Fox in debate, to find him, in his opposition to Lord North, declaring, that "he would be afraid to trust himself with him alone, —that he was the most obnoxious and guilty criminal in the State,—that his blood ought to expiate his misdeeds;" and last, and most *unlucky* of all, "that if *he ever acted with him*, he would be content to be thought *for ever infamous.*" But, from those declarations, it was utterly impossible that any man could extricate himself. The attempt was made, but it only plunged all the parties into deeper scorn.

Still, Fox, in the prime of life and power, was not to be crushed, without signalizing his fall. He now conceived his India Bill, the most formidable and daring attempt at perpetual power ever made by a Minister, throwing the whole patronage of India into the hands of the Cabinet, and, in its results, making that Cabinet irresistible by any force within the constitution. The Bill has been attributed to Burke, who had once more taken office as Paymaster; but all the features of this

usurping measure bear the stamp of the daring and arbitrary mind of his celebrated friend. On the second reading of the Bill, Burke again made one of his magnificent speeches, (Dec. 1, 1783.) It must be acknowledged, that the failing side of this great man's politics was India. He had adopted the subject at an early period, and cherished it as a peculiar possession, until it assumed a supernatural magnitude in his eyes. The remoteness of the land, the wild superstitions, the barbaric grandeur, and tragic catastrophes of its princes; the sweeping tides of Mongol invasion; the wealth, the sufferings, the vastness, and the helplessness of the population, all acted on the original poetic powers of his mind, until fancy was substituted for fact, and he felt himself the elected voice to proclaim the sorrows of India to mankind, the high-priest who was to stand at the propitiatory altar of British justice, the great purifier of England from the last reproach of perfidy and blood.

Whether he saw the deeper purposes of the plan, or whether, if he had been conversant in the whole mystery, he would have drawn back; are questions which can be answered by none but those who know the fever and the supremacy with which some great idea seizes upon the whole frame of the imaginative mind. The language of the speeches strongly corroborates the impression that the chief object before his eyes was the welfare of a nation, whose injuries he had enthusiastically made his own. "By some gentlemen," said he, in the commencement of his speech,

"the subject is taken up as a point of law, or a question of private property; by others, as the intrigue of a petty faction at court. All the void has been filled up with invectives against the coalition, allusions to the loss of America and the activity and inactivity of Ministers. The total silence of those gentlemen concerning the *interests and well-being of the people of India*, and the interest which this nation has in the commerce and revenues of that country, is a strong indication of the value which they set upon those objects."

The Bill and its supporters have now equally perished, and the speech remains only as a monument of superb ability thrown away. But India is now more than ever an engrossing topic; every year compels us to feel its importance more deeply; and until the British banner is torn down by a Cossack invasion; or England, by that sacred liberality which is the wisest of all expenditure, plants her institutions, her language and above all, her church, in every region of that mighty land, establishing her mastery by the noblest of all titles, the unrestrained communion of good, India must be a perilous contemplation to the councils of England. Burke's geographical glance at the extent of the English dependencies in India fifty years ago may aid us to feel the extraordinary extent of dominion for which we are henceforth to legislate. "With very few, and those inconsiderable, intervals, the British dominion, in either the Company's name, or in the names of princes absolutely dependent on the

Company, extends from the mountains which separate India from Tartary to Cape Comorin; that is, one-and-twenty degrees of latitude. In the northern parts, it is a solid mass of land about eight hundred miles in length, and four or five hundred broad. As you go southward, it becomes narrower for a space; it afterwards dilates, but narrower or broader, you possess the whole eastern and north-eastern coast of that vast country, quite from the borders of Pegu. Bengal, Bahar, and Orissa, with Benares, measure 161,978 square English miles, a territory considerably larger than the whole kingdom of France. Oude, with its dependent provinces, is 53,286 square miles, not a great deal less than England. The Carnatic, with Tanjore and the Circars, is 65,948 square miles, very considerably larger than England. The whole of the Company's dominions, comprehending Bombay and Salsette, amount to 281,412 square miles, which forms a territory larger than any European dominion, Russia and Turkey excepted. Through all that vast extent of country, there is not a man who eats a mouthful of rice but by permission of the East India Company."

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The Tartar Invasions.—"The several irruptions of Arabs, Tartars, and Persians, into India, were, for the greater part, ferocious, bloody, and wasteful in the extreme; and entrance into the dominion of that country was, as generally, with small comparative effusion of blood. But the difference in favour of the first conquerors is this; the Asiatic conquerors very soon

abated of their ferocity, because they made the conquered country their own. They rose and fell with the rise and fall of the territory they lived on. Fathers there deposited the hopes of their posterity, and children there beheld the monuments of their fathers. There their lot was finally cast, and it is the natural wish of all that their lot should not be cast in a bad land. Poverty, sterility, and desolation, are not a recreating prospect to the eye of man; and there are very few who can bear to grow old among the curses of a whole people. If their passion or their avarice drove the Tartar lords to acts of rapacity or tyranny, there was time enough even in the short life of man to bring round the ill effects of an abuse of power upon the power itself. If hoards were made by violence and tyranny, they were still domestic hoards; and domestic profusion, or the rapine of a more powerful and prodigal hand, restored them to the people. Even avarice and usury itself operated for both the preservation and the employment of national wealth. The husbandman and manufacturer paid heavy interest; but then they augmented the fund from which they were again to borrow. Their resources were dearly bought, but they were sure, and the general stock of the community grew by the general effort."

In contrasting the results of the Company's government with this necessary process, by which the savage conquerors of India were compelled to make some return to the land, Burke drew from the state of affairs at the time; but a time when the Company was still

struggling with the difficulties of a new dominion, and forced to employ all its powers in self-preservation! British India at this day would present a very different picture from that of 1783. "With us," said Burke, "no pride erects stately monuments which repair the mischief which pride had produced, and adorn a country out of its own spoils. England has erected no *churches*, no *hospitals*, no *palaces*, no *schools*. England has built no bridges, made no highroads, cut no navigation, dug out no reservoirs. Every other conqueror of every other description has left some monument of either state or beneficence behind him. Were we to be driven out of India this day, nothing would remain to tell that it had been possessed during the inglorious period of our dominion, by anything better than the ourang outang or the tiger."

This philippic is justifiable no longer. The first secure possession of peace enabled the natural activity and benevolent spirit of the British mind to display itself in the erection of those churches, palaces, and schools, whose want the orator so strikingly deplores. A larger liberality will be wiser still; the extension of the Established Church of England must be the preliminary to *all solid British interest in India*, and by spreading the purest form of the purest religion, will confer a benefit on the whole peninsula, greater than nation ever before conferred upon nation.

From the close of the American war, a great European era had commenced. The spirit which had gone forth in that revolution was to take successive forms

of popular fascination and royal terror, to dazzle every nation of Europe, and, after plunging the Continent into all the miseries of the most ruinous of all wars, to sink down suddenly into the spot of corruption from which it rose. The freedom which was given by revolt in Europe, was to be punished by the tyranny which in all ages has been its natural offspring; and the nation which had worshipped it with the most reckless idolatry, was to furnish the great compensating moral, that out of evil only evil can come. But this moral was not to flash upon man in the lightnings of heaven, nor be written before his eyes by a supernatural finger on the walls of his banquet. It was, like all high lessons of Providence, (whose chief human acts are expressly for the teaching of man,) to be forced upon his comprehension by degrees suited to its slowness. His fears and hopes were to be made sensitive by actual suffering, before the discovery that national virtue was national strength. Great reverses of fortune were to teach him that there was something concerned in the regulation of human affairs beyond the foresight of politics; partial successes were from time to time to revive the drooping vigour of Europe. At length the whole power of evil, scattered through the revolutionary soil, was to unite in one centre; an individual was to start up, like the crown of a new volcano, to be the conduit of all the scattered streams of eruption, and bewilder all eyes with the malignant lustre of his blaze. But when the last hour of European hope seemed at hand, it was to

be shewn that the old laws of Providence were still in being, that violence was not to be wisdom, nor tyranny triumph for ever; that a principle of decay was already feeding on the heart of that armed figure of defiance to God and man, and that, like the Herods and persecutors of old, an invisible might was commissioned to walk upon his path, and in the very moment when the "people shouted for him, and called him a God," to smite him and his empire to the dust, and vindicate Heaven.

But the lesson went further still. For the general restoration of Europe, a memorable provision was palpably made in the increased power of England. The fortress which was at once to receive within its gates the remaining hopes of the Continent, flying for shelter from the furious proscriptions of France; and finally to send forth that force by which the madness of revolution was to be coerced with the chains which it bore for every other people of the earth, was to be prepared for its purposes. We are not yet sufficiently remote from the time, to be suffered to see the whole result, nor even the whole preparative. But there is no instance in history of a nation so suddenly assuming vigour at home, and influence abroad, as England; from the period of the American war until that of the war with France; a vigour and influence singularly unconnected with the usual means of power,—warlike success, the discovery of new dominion, encroachments on neighbouring States, or new inroads on the great outlying wealth of the world. Even the loss

of her American provinces had, beyond question, strengthened her home defence; by concentrating her force within her own borders; relieved her finances from a perpetually increasing burden for the expenses of a restless possession; converted a rebellious colony into a commercial ally; and, by a still more effectual change, had healed a source of angry divisions at home, and withdrawn the public mind from Transatlantic bickerings, to fix it upon the fearful hazards that were swelling and shaping within twenty miles of her shore. But a still more important change was to take place in the character of her government.

For twenty years before, the English Cabinet was the very scene of mutation; a political caravansera, in which the strangers of to-day were the guests of to-morrow; a tide-way, filled and empty every twenty-four hours, a perpetual flux and reflux of the political stream; if its truer emblem, in those days of public impotence, was not to be found in the churchyard,—the successive remnants of the decayed making room for the successive deposits of the dead. But this system was now to be at an end. England was to have a solid government at last. The Cabinet was to be no more an antechamber; with the doors of the King's closet locked, until it pleased the court to announce that they were open for a fresh accession of visitors, equally temporary. Pitt was to stand at the head of English council, and to stand until he had impressed his own powerful spirit upon English resistance, crushed disaffection, given confidence to Europe, asserted the

steadiness of British principle, and marshalled the strength of the empire into that order, which waited only the word to carry the standards of loyalty and national safety over the fallen force of military usurpation. The share which fell to the lot of Burke in this most brilliant era of our history, is to be told in a more advanced portion of this brief Memoir. But even here we cannot refuse the expressive panegyric of Grattan, a kindred genius; like him converted, however late in life, from partisanship, to the cause of his country; and fitter than any man then alive to inscribe an imperishable record on the tomb of departed greatness.

"On the French subject," said Grattan, in 1815, in his speech for the renewal of the war, "speaking of authority, we cannot forget Mr Burke—Mr Burke, the prodigy of nature and acquisition. He read everything, he saw everything, he foresaw everything. His knowledge of history amounted to a power of foretelling; and when he perceived the wild work that was doing in France, that great political physician, intelligent of symptoms, distinguished between the access of fever and the force of health; and what other men conceived to be the vigour of her constitution, he knew to be no more than the paroxysm of her madness; and then, prophet-like, he pronounced the destinies of France, and in his prophetic fury admonished nations."

But a long interval was to interpose in the life of Burke, between his growing reluctance to the heady

politics of Fox, and his direct recognition of the manly, rational, and English-minded system of the Minister. With no personal habits of prostration to urge him into a degrading alliance with power; stimulated by neither the passion for title, which turns so many proud men into slaves, nor the craving for wealth, which presents the covetous man a willing tool for any public baseness; Burke, reposing on the strength of a reputation, of which he must have been conscious, and contented with the rank, nobler than all adventitious title, which he had secured in the mind of his country, calmly waited his time.

We have hitherto followed his course through the obstacles of an obscure birth and a narrow fortune, to a high influence in the councils of the nation; his weapons and his ambition equally legitimate; no man less sacrificing the sense of right to the sense of expediency. He had seen the heights of popularity reached hourly at a spring, while he was climbing his way, sometimes dubiously, always slowly. Wilkes was chicaning his ascent to the summit, and Fox was storming it, while Burke was legitimately advancing by the broad road of great abilities exercised on great subjects, sustained by unexampled industry, and directed by native honour. But his political life had commenced under circumstances which still threw their shadow over his career; his early connexion with the Marquis of Rockingham had bound him to the whole heavy system of that most formal of Ministers. It had even done worse. Party is not buried in the grave

of a minister. It bound him to the fortunes of his successors; for, under ordinary circumstances, no man can abjure his party, untouched by the imputation of having broken his faith. Burke thus found himself suddenly transferred from the cold and decorous policy of his noble patron, to the passionate and hazardous system of Fox. It was matter of common knowledge, that the extravagances of that celebrated leader were altogether alien to the clear and temperate views of Burke; as it is now matter of history, that this incompatibility at length took the shape of open variance. When the question was no longer one of abstractions, but of the actual existence of England, Burke unhesitatingly cast off the bond, thenceforth devoting himself to a cause always congenial to his feelings, and alone worthy of his genius. Finally, leaving his assailants to the forlorn task of struggling against truth, under the pretext of principle; and fighting against the security of England, under the mask of patriotism—he retrieved his fame, established himself in the highest place of national gratitude, and made his country the light and leader of Europe.

CHAPTER VIII.

Nabob of Arcot—Burke's Speech on India Affairs—Hyder Ali—Hastings—Dupleix.

The transaction which we have now reached in his career was among the penalties of the bond. The memorable India Bill had overthrown the Administration. In all cases of party failure, the first effort of the friends of the criminal is to transfer the blame; and while Fox, with the openness which belonged to his nature, acknowledged the project as his own, his adherents laboured to throw its whole weight on the head of Burke. The bill was undone; the party who were to have been borne on it into power, into more than power, into a complete and irreversible tyranny over the empire, had gone down with the wreck. But it was still to produce public and striking consequences. Burke, as a leader in all the councils of Opposition, had been largely consulted in the Indian details; and this knowledge, which had a peculiar charm for his vivid fancy, naturally led him into enquiries relative to the conduct of the chief public servants in Hindostan. Among those, the highest was hastily deemed the most guilty; and the result was the memorable impeachment of Warren Hastings.

A preliminary was the scarcely less memorable enquiry into the Nabob of Arcot's debts,—a topic which long engaged the attention of English statesmen, giving rise to a board of commissioners, whose duties occupied nearly half a century, and involving immense sums of money, and the characters of a large number of important individuals.

The Nabob of Arcot was placed on his throne, against the claims of an elder brother and other competitors, by the arms of the East India Company, about the year 1765. It was charged on him, that he subsequently attempted some seizures of neighbouring territory, and some interior arrangements of his own, incompatible with right, and his compact with the Company; that to accomplish those objects, he had intrigued with the chief servants of the Company, and that in the course of the traffic he had disbursed vast sums among the delinquent officials. It was considered as an evidence of some extraordinary proceedings, that this prince seemed to relinquish all personal interest in his dominions. He withdrew from his palaces and provinces, and settled in a comparatively obscure abode in the suburbs of Madras. There he remained for a succession of years, carrying on various complicated negotiations with the Company, thwarting the Government by means of its own officers, and purchasing immunities and territories in defiance of the principles alike of British faith and Indian tranquillity. It was alleged, that not merely secret moneys were distributed among the principal indivi-

duals of the Government, but that the *debts* which the Nabob stated to be due to a whole host of creditors, were, in fact, bribes, amounting to some millions, and Parliament was called on to make enquiry into the right of the claimants, as British subjects, to require payment from a territory which was under British protection. Fox, in 1785, brought the topic before the House, on a motion "for copies and extracts of all letters and orders of the Court of Directors" on the subject. It was further alleged, that the Nabob of Arcot had sent troops into the dominions of the Rajah of Tanjore, pillaged the country, and imprisoned the prince, for the seizure of money sufficient to pay those demands. An outcry now arose through all circles connected with Indian affairs against the injustice of this course, and the Directors commenced an enquiry. The enquiry was again negatived by the Minister, who had formed other views of Indian government. But the debts were acknowledged, and a fund for their discharge was assigned from the revenues of the Carnatic. This detail is necessary for understanding Burke's speech. It was the last in the debate, and was worthy of concluding a competition between the great masters of parliamentary eloquence.

After some general remarks on the deficiency of enlarged views in the Ministry, and on the ability still residing in the House of Commons—"stripped as it then was of its brightest ornaments, and of its most important privileges," (so old is the language of political complaint), Burke proceeded to contrast the narrow-

ness of the Ministers' restoratives with the profusion of his means of ruin. "Out of some, I know not what, remains of Irish hereditary revenue, out of the surplus of deficiency, out of the savings of prodigality, this Minister of wonder (Pitt) will provide support for this nation, sinking under the mountainous load of *two hundred and thirty* millions of debt! But while we look with pain at his desperate and laborious trifling, while we are apprehensive that he will break his back in stooping to pick up chaff and straws, he recovers himself at an elastic bound, and, with a broad-cast swing of his arm, he squanders over his Indian field a sum far greater than the whole hereditary revenue of the kingdom of Ireland. Strange as this conduct in Ministry is, it is still true to itself, and faithful to its own perverted order. Those who are bountiful to crimes, will be rigid to merit and penurious to service. Their penury is even held out as a cover to their prodigality. The economy of injustice is to furnish resources for the fund of corruption. They pay off their protection to great crimes and great criminals, by being inexorable to the paltry frailties of little men. Those modern flagellants are sure, with a rigid fidelity, to whip their own enormities on the vicarious back of every small offender."

The Nabob's Debt.—"From 1760 to 1780, the extraction of money from the Carnatic probably did not amount to a great deal less than twenty millions of money. During the deep silent plan of this steady stream of wealth, which set from India into Europe,

it generally passed over with no adequate observation. But happening at some periods to meet rifts of rocks that checked its course, it grew more noisy and attracted more notice. The pecuniary discussion caused by the accumulation of part of the fortunes of their servants in a debt from the Nabob of Arcot, was the first thing which very particularly called for, and long engaged, the attention of the Court of Directors. The debt amounted to L.880,000 sterling, claimed, for the most part, by English gentlemen residing at Madras. This capital, settled at length by order at 10 per cent. afforded an annuity of L.88,000. Finally, the whole debt, amounting to four millions four hundred and forty thousand pounds! produced annuities amounting to L.623,000 a-year; a good deal more than one-third of the land-tax of England, at 4s. in the pound; a good deal more than double the whole annual dividend of the East India Company, the nominal masters of those proprietors.

"When this gigantic phantom of debt first appeared before a young Minister, it naturally would have justified some apprehension. Such a prodigy would have filled any man with superstitious fears. He would have exorcised that shapeless, nameless form, and adjured it to tell by what means a small number of individuals, of no consequence, possessed of no lucrative offices, without the command of armies, or administration of revenues, without profession of any kind, or any sort of trade sufficient to employ a pedlar, could have in a few years, some in a few months, amassed

treasures equal to the revenues of a respectable kingdom." * * * * "That there is an eternal debt 'still paying, still to owe,' which must be bound on the present generation in India, and entailed on their mortgaged posterity for ever. A debt of millions in favour of a set of men, whose names, with few exceptions, are either buried in the obscurity of their talents, or dragged into light by the enormity of their crimes." * * * *

"The Nabob and his creditors are not adversaries, but collusive parties. The litigation is not between their rapacity and his riches; but between him and them confederating on the one side, and the miserable inhabitants of a ruined country on the other. Refusing a shilling from his hoards, he is always ready, nay, with eagerness and passion, he contends for delivering up to those pretending creditors, his territory and subjects. It is therefore not from treasuries and mines, but from the food of your unpaid armies, from the blood withheld from the veins and whipped out of the backs of the most miserable of men, that we are to pamper extortion, usury, and peculation, under the false names of debtors and creditors of state."

He then fiercely turns to the Ministerial share in sanctioning a portion of those claims. "What corrupt men, in the fond imaginations of a sanguine avarice, had not the confidence to propose, they have found a Chancellor of the Exchequer hardy enough to undertake. He has cheered their drooping spirits: he has thanked the peculators for not despairing of

their common wealth: he has replaced the twenty-five per cent due." * * * * "Let no man hereafter talk of the decaying energies of nature. All the acts and monuments in the records of peculation, the consolidated corruption of ages, the patterns of exemplary plunder in the heroic times of Roman iniquity, never equalled the gigantic corruption of this single act. Never did Nero, in all the insolent prodigality of despotism, deal out to his prætorian guards a donation fit to be named with the largess showered down by the bounty of our Chancellor of the Exchequer on the faithful band of his Indian sepoys."

After this burst, which must be looked on as merely a shewy preamble to awake the ears of the House to the graver truths, he states with striking effect the sources of Indian emoluments in his day, and the true origin of those intricate transactions. "The great fortunes made in India in the beginning of conquest, naturally excited an emulation through the whole succession of the Company's service. But, in the Company, it gave rise to other sentiments. They did not find the new channels of acquisition flow with equal riches to them. On the contrary, the high flood-tide of private emolument was generally in the lowest ebb of their affairs. They began also to fear that the fortune of war might take away what the fortune of war had given. Wars were accordingly discouraged by repeated injunctions; and, that their servants might not be bribed into them by the native princes, they were strictly forbidden to take any money whatsoever

from their hands. But vehement passion is ingenious in resources. They soon fell upon a contrivance which answered their purposes far better. They reversed their proceedings. Instead of receiving presents, they made loans: instead of carrying on wars in their own name, they contrived an authority at once irresistible and irresponsible, in whose name they might ravage at pleasure; and, thus freed from all restraint, they indulged themselves in the most extravagant speculations of plunder. The cabal of creditors inspired into the mind of the Nabob of Arcot, then a dependent of the humblest order on the Company, a scheme of the most wild and desperate ambition. First, they persuaded him to believe himself a principal member in the political system of Europe. Next, they held out to him, and he readily imbibed, the idea of the general empire of Hindostan. As a preliminary, they prevailed on him to propose a tripartite division of that vast country; one part to the Company, another part to the Mahrattas, and the third to himself. To himself he reserved all the southern part of the great peninsula, comprehended under the general name of the Deccan."

He then proceeds to detail the interior arrangements of this extraordinary scheme, which seem almost incredible, if any thing can exceed the extravagance of minds stimulated by avarice, and in possession of power. "The Company was to appear in the Carnatic in no other light than as a contractor for the provision of armies, and in the hire of mercenaries. This

disposition was to be secured by the Nabob's putting himself *under the guarantee of France,* and by means of that rival nation, preventing the English for ever from assuming an equality, much less a superiority, in the Carnatic. In pursuance of this treasonable project, they extinguished the Company as a sovereign power in that part of India; they withdrew the Company's garrisons from all the forts and strongholds of the Carnatic, they declined to receive the ambassadors from foreign courts, and remitted them to the Nabob of Arcot; they fell upon and totally destroyed the oldest ally of the Company, the King of Tanjore, and plundered the country to the amount of near five millions sterling." If those statements were faithful, European treason must hide its diminished head; the most capacious contempt of law, allegiance, and national interests in England, must shrink into trifling before this gigantic turpitude. Well might his indignation flame out against culprits who thus trafficked in kingdoms, and swindled away the supremacy of their country. But a still more striking scene opens, when, from the details of the crime, he reaches the history of the punishment; and after leading through the labyrinth of darkness and iniquity, suddenly brings us into the broad and angry glare of the tempest of retributive justice. The fragment has long been memorable as one of the finest evidences of the genius of the great speaker, unequalled in its combination of the images of magnificent horror, the most splendid picture of desolation in the annals of eloquence.

The Invasion of the Carnatic.—"Among the victims to this plan of universal plunder, worthy of the heroic avarice of the projectors, you have all heard, (and he has made himself to be well remembered,) of an Indian chief called Hyder Ali Khan. This man possessed the Western, as the Company, under the name of the Nabob of Arcot, does the Eastern division of the Carnatic. It was among the leading measures of the Cabal, (according to their own emphatic language,) to *extirpate* this Hyder Ali. They declared the Nabob of Arcot his sovereign, and himself a rebel, and publicly invested their instrument with the sovereignty of the kingdom of Mysore. But their victim was not of the passive kind. They were soon obliged to conclude a treaty of peace with this *rebel* at the gates of Madras. But the Cabinet Council of English creditors would not suffer the Nabob to sign the treaty. From that time forward, a continued plot was carried on within the Divan, black and white, of the Nabob of Arcot, for the destruction of Hyder Ali.

"When at length Hyder found that he had to do with men who either would sign no convention, or whom no signature could bind, and who were the determined enemies of human intercourse itself, he decreed to make the country possessed by those incorrigible and predestined criminals a memorable example to mankind. He resolved, in the gloomy recesses of a mind capacious of such things, to leave the whole Carnatic an everlasting monument of vengeance, and to put perpetual desolation as a barrier between him

and those, against whom the faith which holds the moral elements of the world together was no protection. He became at length so confident of his force, so collected in his might, that he made no secret whatever of his dreadful resolution. Having terminated his disputes with every enemy and every rival; who buried their mutual animosities in their common detestation against the creditors of the Nabob of Arcot; he drew from every quarter whatever a savage ferocity could add to his new rudiments in the arts of destruction, and compounding all the materials of fury, havoc, and desolation, into one black cloud, hung for a while on the declivities of the mountains. While the authors of all those evils were stupidly gazing on this menacing meteor which blackened all their horizon, it suddenly burst, and poured down the whole of its contents upon the plains of the Carnatic. Then ensued a scene of woe, the like of which no eye had seen, no heart conceived, and which no tongue can adequately tell. All the horrors of war before known or heard of, were mercy to that new havoc. A storm of universal fire blasted every field, consumed every house, destroyed every temple. The miserable inhabitants flying from their flaming villages, in part were slaughtered; others, without regard to sex, to age, to the respect of rank, or sacredness of function, fathers torn from children, husbands from wives, enveloped in a whirlwind of cavalry and amidst the goading spears of drivers, and the trampling of pursuing horses, were swept into captivity in an unknown and strange land. Those who

were able to evade the tempest fled to the walled cities. But escaping from fire, sword, and exile, they fell into the jaws of famine.

"The alms of the settlement in this dreadful emergency were certainly liberal, and all was done that private charity could do. But it was a people in beggary, it was a nation which stretched out its hands for food. For months together, those creatures of sufferance, whose very excess and luxury in their most plenteous days had fallen short of the allowance of our austerest fasts, silent, patient, resigned, without sedition or disturbance, almost without complaint, perished by a hundred a-day in the streets of Madras; every day seventy at least laid their bodies on the streets, or on the glacis of Tanjore, and expired of famine in the granary of India.

"For eighteen months, without intermission, this destruction raged, from the gates of Madras to the gates of Tanjore. And so completely did those masters in their art, Hyder Ali, and his more ferocious son, absolve themselves of their impious vow, that when the British armies traversed, as they did, the Carnatic, for hundreds of miles in all directions, through the whole line of their march, they saw not one man, not one woman, not one child, not one four-footed beast of any description whatever. One dead uniform silence reigned over the whole region. The hurricane of war passed through every part of the central provinces of the Carnatic. The Carnatic is a country not much inferior in extent to England. Fi-

gure to yourself, Mr Speaker, the land in whose representative chair you sit; figure to yourself the form and fashion of your sweet and cheerful country from Thames to Trent, north and south, and from the Irish to the German Sea, east and west, emptied and disembowelled (may God avert the omen of our crimes) by so accomplished a desolation!"

In hovering over the map of India, his eye is caught by that characteristic of the country, the vast reservoirs which abound in India, and which are connected with almost every purpose of Indian life, religion, show, pleasure, and subsistence; his imagination is excited again, and he pours out a rich though brief panegyric on their founders.

"There cannot be in the Carnatic and Tanjore fewer than ten thousand of those reservoirs of the larger and middling dimensions, to say nothing of those for domestic services and the uses of religious purification. Those are the monuments of real kings, who were the fathers of their people; testators to a posterity which they embraced as their own. Those are the grand sepulchres built by ambition, but by the ambition of an insatiable benevolence, which, not contented with reigning in the dispensation of happiness during the contracted term of human life, had strained, with all the reachings and graspings of a vivacious mind, to extend the dominion of their bounty beyond the limits of nature, and to perpetuate themselves through generations of generations the guardians, the protectors, the nourishers of mankind."

From details of the productive powers, and of the ruin of those vast provinces—which held the House suspended in delight at the picturesque richness of the description—Burke suddenly started into a keen invective against the conduct of the Indian Officials, and its sanction by the British Ministers.

"On the view of such a chasm of desolation as that which yawned in the midst of those countries, to the north and south, what would a virtuous and enlightened Ministry have done? They would have reduced all their most necessary establishments, they would have suspended the justest payments, they would have employed every shilling derived from the producing, to reanimate the powers of the unproductive parts. While they were performing this fundamental duty, while they were celebrating those mysteries of justice and humanity, they would have told the corps of fictitious creditors, whose crimes were their claims, that they must keep an awful distance, that they must silence their inauspicious tongues, that they must hold off their profane, unhallowed hands from this holy work; they would have proclaimed with a voice that should make itself heard, that in every country the first creditor is *the plough!* that this original, indefeasible claim supersedes every other demand." * * * *

"But, on this grand point of the restoration of the country, there is not one syllable to be found in the correspondence of ministers; they felt nothing for a land desolated by fire, sword, and famine. Their sympathies took another direction. They were touched

with pity for bribery, so long tormented with a fruitless itching of its palms; their bowels yearned for usury, that had missed the harvest of its returning months; they felt for peculation, raking in the dust of an empty treasury; they were melted into compassion for rapine and oppression, licking their dry, parched, unbloody jaws."

His pencil then gave the portraiture of one of those whom he designated as "gorgeous criminals," the once well-known Paul Benfield. Benfield was a man of cleverness and activity, who, having made himself useful to the governors of the Presidencies in the difficult times of India, rapidly became wealthy, and of course influential. The native princes were still powerful, and the British supremacy was hourly in danger. The chief source of our conquests has been the policy of keeping up a standing army. As the native princes generally disbanded their troops at the end of the campaign, or the troops disbanded themselves, and thus their highest success could be only temporary; while on the other hand, the command of a constant force, however inferior in numbers, rendered defeat on the British side almost nugatory, and made success solid. But the standing army must depend on the permanence of the revenue; and thus the chief skill of the government was gradually absorbed in expedients of finance. Benfield, and men of his species, were essential instruments to this stability of British possession; and rapacious as he probably was, the necessity of the case brought him within the protection of the Cabinet.

The motion against the creditors of the Nabob of Arcot was thrown out by a great majority. But it is one of the thousand instances of the precariousness of wealth suddenly acquired, that Benfield died a bankrupt. The man, of whom it was told, that standing at the door of his magnificent mansion in England, and seeing some tardiness in the coming up of his equipages, he cried out, "Why don't you send up *some more coaches and six!*" and who was at one time in the possession of wealth which almost justified the ostentatious cry, sank, by some change of Indian affairs, into utter decay. But, at the time of this motion, he was the great Goliath of the Philistines of finance, and of course a mark for every shaft of the troops, light and heavy, of Opposition.

"Our Minister," said Burke, "formed, as you all know, a new plan for supporting the freedom of our constitution by court intrigues, and for removing its corruptions by Indian delinquency. In his anxious researches upon the subject, natural instinct would settle his choice upon Paul Benfield. Paul Benfield is the grand parliamentary reformer, the reformer to whom the whole chair of reformers bow, and to whom even the right honourable gentleman himself must yield the palm; for what region in the empire, what city, what borough, what county, what tribunal in this kingdom, is not full of his labours?" * * * "Not content with this, this public-spirited *usurer*, amidst his charitable toils for the relief of India, did not forget the poor constitution of his native country. He did not

disdain to stoop to the trade of a wholesale upholsterer for this House, to furnish it, not with the faded tapestry-figures of antiquated merit, such as decorate, and may reproach some other houses, but with real, solid, living patterns of true modern virtue. Paul Benfield made, reckoning himself, no fewer than eight members in the last Parliament. What copious streams of pure blood must he not have transfused into the veins of the present!

"But, what is more striking than the real services of this newly-imported patriot, is his modesty. As soon as he had conferred this benefit on the constitution, he withdrew himself from our applause. He was no sooner elected, than he set off for Madras, and defrauded the longing eyes of Parliament. We have never enjoyed in this House the luxury of beholding that minion of the human race, and contemplating that visage which has so long reflected the happiness of nations." * * * "The Minister, through a sagacity which never failed him in those pursuits, found out in Mr Benfield's representative his exact resemblance. A specific attraction by which he gravitates towards all such characters, soon brought him into close connexion with Mr Benfield's agent here. This man was held up to the world as legislator of Hindostan. To secure his zeal against all risk, he was brought in for a Ministerial borough. For your Minister, this worn out veteran submitted to enter into the dusty field of a London contest. In the same cause he submitted to keep a sort of public office, or counting-house, where

the whole business of the last election was managed. It was managed upon Indian principles, and for an Indian interest. This was the golden cup of abominations—this the chalice of the fornications of rapine, usury, and oppression, which was held out by the gorgeous Eastern harlot; which so many of the people, so many of the nobles of this land drained to the very dregs. Do you think that no reckoning was to follow this debauch—no payment was to be demanded for this riot of public drunkenness?"

The Orator asserts, that the agreed payment for those parliamentary services was the protection of the Minister for Benfield's Indian plunder. This plunder he calculates, in the first instance, as amounting to L.592,000 at 6 per cent; and, finally, as, by a profit of 24 per cent on L.480,000 a-year, producing to him an income of L.149,000 sterling a-year! "Here," he exclaims, "is a specimen of the new and pure Aristocracy created by the Right Honourable Gentleman, as the support of the Crown and Constitution, against the old, corrupt, refractory, natural interests of the kingdom. This is the grand counterpoise against all odious coalitions of their interests. A single Benfield outweighs them all: a criminal, who long since ought to have fattened the region kites with his offal, is, by his Majesty's Ministers, enthroned in the government of a great kingdom, and enfeoffed with an estate, which, in the comparison, effaces the splendour of all the nobility of Europe."

In an admirable passage, bearing wisdom for all go-

vernments and all times, he then refutes the argument of impunity derived from distance. "It is difficult for the most wise and upright Government to correct the abuses of remote, delegated power, productive of unmeasured wealth, and protected by the boldness and strength of the same riches. Those abuses, full of their own wild vigour, will grow and flourish under mere neglect. But where the supreme authority, not content with winking at the rapacity of its inferior instruments, is so shameless as openly to give premiums for disobedience to its own laws, when it will not trust to the activity of avarice in the pursuit of its own gains, when it secures public robbery by all the careful jealousy with which it ought to protect property, the commonwealth is then totally perverted from its purposes. Neither God nor man will long endure it; nor will it long endure itself. In that case there is an unnatural infection, a pestilential taint fermenting in the constitution of society, which fevers and convulsions of some kind must throw off, or in which the vital powers, worsted in an unequal struggle, are pushed back upon themselves, and, by a reversal of their whole functions, fester to gangrene, to death; and, instead of what was just now the delight and boast of the creation, there will be cast out into the sun a bloated carcass, an offence and horror to the world."

Burke's indignation at what he thus powerfully describes, was not a sudden impulse; it had been growing upon him for years. In a Select Committee of the House of Commons, in 1780, his attention had been

strongly drawn to the abuses of the Indian Government. All that belonged to India found a congenial interest in the Oriental structure of his mind. A long succession of Indian calamities,—public feeling rapidly fixed on those remote but most important subjects,—the magnitude of the asserted crimes,—the insolent contempt of the Indian officials for a Legislature at the distance of eight thousand miles,—the almost overwhelming opulence of Indian fortunes,—all combined to render the whole enquiry at once worthy of a British statesman, and exciting to a man of equal talent and sensibility. In examining the affairs of the Company, Burke had at first no peculiar culprit in his contemplation. It has been injuriously and untruly said, that his hostility to Hastings arose from some offence offered to William Burke, his relative. But we see that Hastings was not the original object. Paul Benfield, Sir Elijah Impey, Atkinson, the whole line of Indian agency, were assailed as they rose in succession before him. It was only when he had followed the agents to their principals, and found the chain of presumed enormities finally held in the hand of the Governor-General, that, leaving all inferior criminals behind, he grasped at the leader of the "usurpation of the throne of India."

Hastings was a remarkable man, even in a time of eminence. Born in 1732, the son of a clergyman in Oxfordshire; after an education at Westminster, he commenced his Indian career, as a Writer in Bengal, in 1750. He there applied himself to the study of

languages, and became distinguished for his proficiency in Persian. After a residence of fifteen years, he returned to England, but with a fortune so limited, that he is said to have found it necessary to give lessons in the Oriental tongues; he certainly made some applications for the establishment of a Persian professorship in Oxford. Yet this humble period was probably not among the least happy of his glittering and powerful career; his literature brought him into society in London, and he enjoyed for some years the friendship of Johnson and other accomplished men.

But his merits, though overlooked, had not been forgotten. In 1768 he was again sent to India, as second in council at Madras. His ability there deserved a higher rank, and in three years he was President of the Council in Bengal. In three years more he was Governor-General of India! This high rank he held for the unequalled period of fifteen years; frequently clamoured against in England by the successive Oppositions, Cabinets, and Boards of Directors; yet resolutely retaining his power, and making its retention popular, in both India and England, by the vigour, intelligence, and uniform success of his enterprises. A character of this decisive cast must make enemies among those who suffered from his animadversions, envied his success, or misunderstood his policy. A class different from all those, looked with a keener sense to the means than to the results of his government, and forgot the necessity for strong measures in a country of half-barbarian chieftainries, with whom

peace was only a preparative for war, and all negociation began or ended in treachery. But the Governor-General had other sins to answer for than his own. Every peculation, and every ravage, of minor power, was heaped on the head of the supreme authority; and while the Cabinet, conscious of his services, sustained Hastings against the caprices of the India House, and the India House, in its turn, sustained him against the jealousy of the Cabinet; the people, ignorant of the difficulties, and unexcited by the successes of a Government removed half the world from England, gave way to a general and angry prejudice against the most successful public servant of the empire.

At length, in 1785, he voluntarily resigned, and returned to Europe, at the period when Lord Macartney had been appointed to his office, an appointment which—such was the vigorous grasp with which he held power, and his habitual contempt for the vacillating councils of his masters—he had declared that he would resist by force. But his own act prevented a collision which would have sent the new official to a dungeon, and might have ended in the revolt of Hindostan. In England he was instantly met by an impeachment. This severe and violent proceeding was supported by the whole strength of the Opposition, which had been thrown out by the India Bill, and felt the double interest of vengeance and popularity. What with Burke was enthusiasm, with his associates was faction. Passion blinded them both. The Minister alone triumphed. The impeachment was equally im-

politic and unsuccessful. After a trial which continued at intervals for the extraordinary period of nine years, Hastings was fully acquitted; and, heartily wearied of public life and public men, he retired, with a fortune much diminished by the expenses of his prosecution, but reinforced by an honourable annuity of some thousands a-year from the East India Company, to an estate at Daylesford in Worcestershire, where, in 1818, he died. He had been made a privy-counsellor, but taking no interest in public affairs, his later years were given up to literature and ease.

The rapidity of Hastings's progress from a clerkship to the highest rank of India, has often excited surprise, but India had been always the land of rapid elevation. Something of that sudden fortune which makes the Turkish cobbler of to-day the Turkish vizier of to-morrow, belongs to all Asiatic countries. Hastings was only an instance that the spirit of the clime had penetrated even the solid barriers of English office. France had furnished a similar example but a few years before, in the instance of the celebrated and unfortunate founder of her brief Indian empire, Joseph Dupleix.

The life of Dupleix had begun in obscurity; by some accident his attention was turned to the East, and in 1730 he had been sent out as a principal agent to Chandernagore. The genius which in France might have exhibited itself only in the more expert use of the die, or flourished in panegyrics on a King's mistress, and epigrams on a Minister, now found its natural field. By singular intelligence, animation, and acti-

vity, he became the soul of this decaying settlement, and in a few years raised it to prosperity. The Asiatic rivalship had now begun between England and France, and the value of a vigorous administrator was so fully felt by the government at home, that Dupleix was placed in charge of Pondicherry, the principal settlement of the French in India. The English fleets and armies were soon in motion; and Pondicherry was the first point of attack. But it was found to be no longer in the disordered state of former times. Dupleix by new connexions with the native powers, by the exertion of the natural resources of his province, and still more by the gallantry and vividness of a mind made for the conduct of great affairs; had put the fortress and territory in a condition of defence for which the assailants were altogether unprepared. The expedition failed, and the new governor received the honours due to his success, in a Marquisate from home, and the ribbon of one of the military orders. With his honours his political views expanded. He spread his connexions still more widely through Hindostan, and by acting at once upon the corruption, the fears, and the ambition of the native sovereigns, proceeded with signal skill and celerity to raise the fabric of French domination in India. The Nabobship of Arcot, the old prize of all competitorship, gave him the first opportunity. Two rivals were in the field. Dupleix instantly entered into a compact with one of them—Chunda Saheb. The French troops put him in possession of the throne; and their services were rewarded by a large territory.

A succession of wars and intrigues, conducted with equal promptitude, at length raised Dupleix to sovereign power in his own person; and all India saw, with astonishment, the clerk of the factory of Chandernagore proclaimed Nabob of the Carnatic, living in royal splendour, and assuming all the functions of sovereignty!

But he had reached the point from which all future steps were to be downwards. The English, who had carried on the war languidly in the beginning, as is their custom, were at length roused by the evidence of their territorial hazard, their exertions suddenly shewed the innate vigour of the national spirit; and, as is equally their custom, they swept all resistance before them. The military genius of Clive, a name equivalent to all that the art of war has of decision, intrepidity, and intelligence; first put a sudden stop to the French progess in the field, and then proceeded from fortress to fortress, until he shook the whole frame of the enemy's power. Dupleix, unsuccessful abroad, became unpopular at home. The English redoubled their efforts. In his perplexity he was forced to make use of the strong measures of men fighting for their last stake. He thus gave new advantages to his opposers in France. The Minister, to escape being crushed in his fall, abandoned him. Dupleix was recalled in 1754, indignant at the Minister, whom he accused of treachery; at the French India Company, against whom he commenced a suit for what he pronounced their robbery of him; at the ingrati-

tude of France, and at the caprices of fortune. But the change was too great to be borne by any of the resources that are to be found in French philosophy. His spirit was broken by his fall; and in a short time this proud, powerful, and brilliant statesman, general, and sovereign, died, and with him died the dominion of his country in the "Golden Peninsula!"

CHAPTER IX.

Character of Burke by the Bishop of Rochester—Trial of Hastings—Twelve Maxims of Genghiz Khan.

BURKE had been charged with personal motives in the impeachment of Hastings. The charge was shown to be groundless; his determination to Indian affairs was the work of his nature, his circumstances, and his opportunities. He had been charged with the personal ambition of figuring as the great assailant of a criminal supported by great influence; but this ambition found no place in his character. No man was more clear-sighted in perceiving the obstacles to final success; no man more habitually declined rash resistance to authority, to harmless prejudice, or to the natural impressions of old attachment, or vigorous service. Burke saw the Crown, the Ministers, and the whole Indian interest, abroad and at home, forming an entrenchment round Hastings. No man better knew the difficulty of forcing that powerful circumvallation. If he attempted it, he knew that he must be prepared to encounter long opposition, to hazard the total loss of popularity, to commit himself and his friends to a cause which might overwhelm their whole public buoy-

ancy, and finally, after years of labour, personal obloquy, and perhaps individual hazard, find such comfort as was to be found in the consciousness that he had volunteered the ruin of his party. The true cause was, that he was urged to this anxious undertaking by the motive which has given birth to the most arduous, and most illustrious, successes of man,—a sense of duty extinguishing all sense of danger. And this was the acknowledged opinion of those most conversant with his mind. "In the mind of Mr Burke," says King, Bishop of Rochester, forcibly and truly, "political principles were not objects of barren speculation. Wisdom in him was always practical. Whatever his understanding adopted as truth, made its way to his heart, and sank deep into it; and his ardent and generous feelings seized with promptitude every occasion of applying it to the use of mankind. Where shall we find recorded exertions of active benevolence at once so numerous, so varied, and so important, made by one man? Among those, the redress of wrongs, and the protection of weakness from the oppression of power, were most conspicuous. And of this the impeachment of Mr Hastings was considered by Mr Burke as, beyond all comparison, the most momentous.

"The assumption of arbitrary power, in whatever shape it appeared, whether under the veil of legitimacy, or skulking in the disguise of state necessity, or presenting the shameless front of usurpation—whether the prescriptive claim of ascendency, or the brief career of official authority, or the newly acquired domi-

nion of a mob, was the pure object of his detestation and hostility; and this is not a fanciful enumeration of possible cases. In the history of Mr Burke, examples will be found referable to each case. His endeavours to stifle it in its birth, or to obstruct its progress, or to redress its oppressions, will be found to have occupied no small portion of his life. The scale upon which oppressions of this kind had been exercised in our East Indian possessions was of such a magnitude, that it required a mind like his to grapple with them. His ardent zeal and unwearied perseverance were not more than equal to the task. He well knew that the impunity of Indian delinquency was demanded by interest too weighty and extensive, and was secured by influence and protection too powerful, to be resisted. The event accordingly did not correspond with his wishes; but the eclat of a triumph was neither necessary to his fame, nor the triumph itself to the satisfaction of his mind. The real cause which he advocated did not depend upon the decision of the Court of Judicature, before which the impeachment was tried From the moment it was voted by the House of Commons, the attainment of its main object was placed out of the power of his opponents. The existence of the enormities with the commission of which the Governor-General was charged, required only to be known; and Mr Burke was firmly persuaded that, by the investigation of the affairs of this Government resulting from the trial, and by the public exposure of the crimes which had been perpetrated, he had not only discharged

a sacred and imperative duty, but had at the same time interposed a powerful check to the *future* commission of such enormities."

The Bishop concludes by stating, that it was the intention of his memorable friend himself to write a "History of the Impeachment," had he not been prevented by illness. A work of this order would have been among the finest treasures of literature. It is not difficult to conceive, with what lessons of wisdom such a performance from such an authority would have enriched the future generations. The subject might be local, and the occasion temporary, but eloquence, polity, and justice would have found in it a great storehouse of their noblest examples. The monument raised to preserve the memory of the passing transactions of India, would, like the pyramid over the dust of forgotten monarchs, have been an imperishable testimonial to the power of the hand that raised it, and to the advance of the country in which it was raised;—the casual purpose extinguished in its lasting evidence of the knowledge, the vigour, and the grandeur of the past to posterity.

The trial of Hastings was the most august form in which English justice had ever appeared. The state had put on its whole majesty: the King, with the Prelates and the lay Peers, sat on the tribunal—the Commons of England stood at the bar. The great functionaries of State and justice were all present in their respective departments. The accused was worthy of this solemnity of preparation. The chief sus-

tainer, for fifteen years, of British supremacy in the most important dominion of the Crown, the conqueror of a vast territory, the great administrator, the financier, the judge, the general, bearing in his own person a power more extensive, more uncontrolled, and more irresponsible, than had ever before been borne by a British viceroy; possessing almost the unbounded confidence of his masters at home, and repaying that confidence by almost an empire; Hastings, the governor of sixty millions of men, and a territory as large as Europe, was the most magnificent victim that ever was swooped on by the beak and talons of public crimination.

The first days of the trial were given to ceremonial. On the third, Burke, as the head of the Committee of the Commons, thus opened the Impeachment (February 15, 1788):—"*My Lords*,—The gentlemen who have it in command to support the Impeachment against Mr Hastings, have directed me to open the cause with a general view of the grounds upon which the Commons have proceeded in their charge against him. They have directed me to accompany this with another general view of the extent, the magnitude, the nature, and the effect of the crimes which they allege to have been by him committed. They have also directed me to give an explanation of such circumstances preceding the crimes charged on Mr Hastings, or concomitant with them, as may tend to elucidate whatever is obscure in the articles. To those they have wished me to add a few illustrative remarks on the

laws, customs, opinions, and manners of the people, who are the objects of the crimes which we charge on Mr Hastings." On this foundation was raised the long series of noble efforts which made the whole progress of this trial one of the most remarkable displays of legal knowledge and oratorical ability in the annals of modern nations. But as, with its time, the local interest has naturally found its close, and it lives to us merely as a fine intellectual effort, a few of those passages that most strikingly exhibit the general powers of their distinguished speaker are alone given.

The India Company.—" There is something in the representation of the East India Company, in their Oriental territory, different from that perhaps of any other nation that has ever transported any part of its power from one country to another. The Company in India is not properly a branch of the British nation, it is only a deputation of individuals. When the Tartars entered into China, when the Arabs and Tartars successively entered into Hindostan, when the Goths and Vandals penetrated into Europe, when the Normans forced their way into England,—in all conquests, migrations, settlements, and colonizations, the new people came as the offset of a nation. The Company in India does not exist as a national colony. The English in India are nothing but a seminary for the succession of officers; they are a nation of placemen; they are a commonwealth without a people; they are a State wholly made up of magistrates. There is nothing that can, in propriety, be called a people,

to watch, to inspect, to balance against the power of office. The power of office, so far as the English nation is concerned, is the sole power of the country. To a body so constituted, confederacy is easy, and has become general. By means of this peculiar circumstance, it has not been difficult for Mr Hastings to embody abuse, and put himself at the head of a regular system of corruption." * * * * * "A circumstance which distinguishes the Company, is the youth of the persons who are employed in its service. The servants have almost universally been sent out to begin their progress in the exercise of high authority at that period of life, which, in all other places, has been employed in the course of a rigid education. They are transferred from slippery youth to perilous independence, from perilous independence to inordinate expectations, from inordinate expectations to boundless power. Schoolboys without tutors, minors without guardians, the world is let loose on them with all its temptations, and they are let loose upon the world with all the powers that despotism involves."

The Gentoos.—"The system and principle of their government is locality: their laws, their manners, their religion, are all local: their legislator (he is lost in the mists of a most obscure antiquity) had it as the great leading principle of his policy, to connect the people with their soil. Accordingly, by one of those anomalies, which a larger acquaintance with our species daily discovers, this aboriginal people of India, who are the softest in their manners of any of our race,

approaching almost to feminine tenderness, formed constitutionally benevolent, and, in many particulars, made to fill a larger circle of benevolence than our morals take in, who extend their good-will to the whole animal creation, are of all nations the most unalliable to any other part of mankind. That bond, which is one of the chief instruments of society, can have no existence with them, the convivial bond. No Hindoo can mix at meals even with those on whom he depends for the meal he eats. But there are other circumstances which render our intercourse full of difficulty. The Sea is between us. The mass of that element, which, by appearing to disconnect, unites mankind, is to them a forbidden road. It is a great gulf fixed between you and them; not so much that elementary gulf, as that gulf which manners, opinions, and laws have *radicated* in the very nature of the people. None of their high *castes*, without great danger to his situation, religion, rank, and estimation, can ever pass the sea; and this forbids for ever all direct communication between that country and this. If we undertake to govern the inhabitants of such a country, we must govern them upon their own principles and maxims, and not upon ours. All change on their part is absolutely impracticable. We have more versatility of character and manners, and it is we who must conform: we know what the empire of opinion is in human nature:—I had almost said that the law of opinion was *human nature itself.* It is, however, the strongest principle in the composition of the frame of the hu-

man mind, and more of the happiness and unhappiness of mankind resides in inward principle than in all external circumstances put together. But if such is the empire of opinion even among us, it has a pure, unrestrained, and despotic power among them."

From this general view, he goes into the detail of Indian feelings, peculiarly as connected with *Caste;* a topic which, fifty years ago, may have looked like the unveiling of some great Oriental mystery. His sketch is admirably adapted to the mysticism of the subject. He approaches it with the solemn ceremonial language of a high priest at the shrine. "Your Lordships are born to hereditary honours in the chief of your houses, the rest mix with the people; but with the Gentoos, they who are born noble can never fall into any second rank. They are divided into four orders; an eternal barrier is placed between them. A man who is born in the highest caste, which at once unites what would be tantamount in this country to the dignity of the Peerage, and the ennobled sanctity of the Episcopal character; the Brahmin who sustains those characters, if he loses his caste, does not fall into an inferior order; he is thrown at once out of all ranks of society; he is precipitated from the proudest elevation of respect and honour to a bottomless abyss of contempt; from purity to pollution, from sanctity to profanation. No honest occupation is open to him; his children are no longer his children. The parent loses that name. The conjugal bond is dissolved. Few survive this most terrible of all calamities. To

speak to an Indian of his caste, is to speak to him of his all. But the rule of caste has given one power more to fortune; for it is singular that caste may be lost not only by voluntary crimes, but by certain involuntary sufferings, disgraces and pollutions, utterly out of their power to prevent. Those who have patiently submitted to imprisonment; those who have not flinched from the scourge; those who have been as unmoved as marble under the torture; those who have laughed at the menaces of death itself, have instantly given way, when it has been attempted to subject them to any of the pollutions by which they lose caste. Tyranny is armed against them with a greater variety of weapons than are found in its ordinary stores. In the course of this trial, your Lordships will see with horror the use which Mr Hastings has made, through his wicked instruments, chosen from the natives themselves, of those superadded means of oppression."

Then follow brief, but singularly graphic sketches, of the several tribes which have been paramount in India. "My Lords, those Gentoo people are the aboriginal people of Hindostan. They are still, beyond comparison, the most numerous. Faults they may have, but Heaven forbid we should pass judgment upon people who framed their laws and institutions prior to our *insect origin* of yesterday." * * * * "They still exist, in a green old age, with all the reverence and passion of antiquity, which other nations have for novelty and change. They have stood firm on their ancient base; they have cast their roots deep in their native soil; their blood, their opinions, and

the soil of their country, make one consistent piece, admitting no mixture, no adulteration, no improvement; their religion has made no converts; their dominion has made no conquests. They have existed in spite of Mahometan and Portuguese bigotry, in spite of Tartarian and Arabian tyranny; in spite of all the fury of successive foreign conquest."

* * * *

"The second era is the time of the Prophet Mahomet. The enthusiasm which animated his first followers; the despotic power which his religion obtained through that enthusiasm; and the advantages derived from both over the enervated, great empires, and broken, disunited, lesser governments of the world, extended the influence of that proud and domineering sect from the banks of the Ganges to the banks of the Loire. This is the period of the Arabs. Those people made a great and lasting impression on India. They established, very early, Mahometan sovereigns in all parts of it." * * * * "Those people when they first settled in India, attempted with the ferocious arm of their prophetic sword to change the religion and manners of the country. But at length, perceiving that their cruelty wearied out itself, and could never touch the constancy of the sufferers, they permitted the native people to remain in quiet, and left the Mahometan religion to operate upon them as it could, by appealing to the ambition or avarice of the great; or by taking the lower people who had lost their caste into the new sect, and thus, from the refuse of the Gentoo,

increasing the bounds of the Mahometan religion. The Mahometans, during the period of the Arabs, never expelled or destroyed the native Gentoo nobility, Zemindars or landholders of the country.

"The third era was the invasion of the Tartars under Tamerlane. Those Tartars did not establish themselves on the ruins of the Hindoos. Their conquests were over the other Mahometans; for Tamerlane invaded Hindostan, as he invaded other countries, in the character of the great reformer of the Mahometan religion. He came as a sort of successor to the rights of the Prophet upon a divine title. He struck at all the Mahometan princes who reigned at that time. He considered them as degenerate from the faith, and as tyrants, abusing their power. To facilitate his conquests over those, he was often obliged to come to a composition with the people of the country. Tamerlane had neither time nor means, nor inclination to dispossess the ancient Rajahs of the country." * * * * "He freed the Hindoos for ever from that tax which the Mahometans laid on every other country over which the sword of Mahomet prevailed; a capitation tax upon all who do not profess the religion of the Mahometans. The Hindoos, by express charter, were exempted from that mark of servitude, and thereby declared not to be a conquered people." * * * * "These circumstances mark that Tamerlane, however he may be indicated by the odious names of Tartar and Conqueror, was no barbarian; that the people who submitted to him, did not submit with the

abject submission of slaves to the sword of a conqueror, but admitted a great, supreme Emperor, who was just, prudent, and politic; instead of the ferocious, oppressive, lesser Mahometan sovereigns, who had before forced their way by the sword into the country.

"The fourth era was that of the Emperor Akber. He was the first of the successors of Tamerlane who obtained possession of Bengal. It is easy to show what his conquest was. It was over the last Mahometan dynasty: he too, like his predecessor Tamerlane, conquered the prince, not the country. The natives, great men and landholders, continued in every part in the possession of their estates, and of the jurisdictions annexed to them.

"The next, the fifth era, is a troubled and vexatious period; the era of the independent Soubahs of Bengal. Five of those Soubahs governed from the year 1717. They grew into independence partly by the calamities and concussions of the empire, which happened during the disputes for the succession of Tamerlane; and principally, by the great shock which the empire received when Thamas Kouli Khan broke into that country, carried off its revenues, overturned the throne, and massacred not only many of the chief nobility, but almost all the inhabitants of the capital. This rude shock, which that empire was never able to recover, enabled the viceroys to become independent; but their independence led to their ruin. Those who had usurped upon their masters, had servants, who usurped upon them. Allaoerdy Khan murdered his

master, and opened a way into Bengal for the Mahrattas. Their retreat was at length purchased, and by a sum which is supposed to amount to five millions sterling. By this purchase he secured the exhausted remains of an exhausted kingdom, and left it to his grandson, Surajah Dowlah, in peace and poverty. On the fall of Surajah Dowlah, in 1756, commenced the last, which is the sixth, the era of the British Empire."

In the second day's address, there is a masterly specimen of his dexterity and grace in relieving the local details by an appeal to general principles. Political philosophy never wore a more stately robe.

"My Lords, to obtain empire is common. To govern it well has been rare indeed. To chastise the guilt of those who have been instruments of imperial sway over other nations, by the high superintending justice of the sovereign state, has not many striking examples among any people. Hitherto we have not furnished our contingent to the records of honour. We have been confounded with the hardy conquerors; our dominion has been a vulgar thing; but we begin to emerge, and I hope that a severe inspection of ourselves, a purification of our own offence, a lustration of the exorbitance of our own power, is a glory reserved for this time, in this nation, to this august tribunal. The year 1756 is a memorable era in the history of the world. It introduced a new nation from the remotest verge of the Western World, with new manners, new customs, new institutions, new opinions, new laws, into the heart of Asia.

" My Lords, if in that part of Asia, whose native, regular government was then broken up—if, at the moment when it had fallen into darkness and confusion, from having become the prey, and almost the sport of the ambition of its homeborn grandeur—if, in that gloomy period, a star had risen from the west, that would prognosticate a better generation, and shed down the sweet influences of order, peace, science, and security to the natives of that vexed and harassed country, we should have been crowned with genuine honour, it would have been a beautiful and noble spectacle to mankind."

In remarking on the reply made by Hastings's friends, that at the worst his despotism was only the common habit of power in India, Burke overwhelms them with a mass of splendid refutation. " Nothing is more false than that despotism is the constitution of any country in Asia. Will your Lordships submit to hear the corrupt practices of mankind made the principles of government? Was there ever heard, that a governor would dare to heap all the evil practices, all the cruelties, oppressions, extortions, corruptions, briberies, of all the ferocious usurpers, desperate robbers, thieves, cheats, and jugglers, that ever had office, from one end of Asia to another, and consolidating all this heap of the crimes and absurdities of barbarous domination into one code, establish it as the whole duty of an English governor!

" *He* have arbitrary power! My Lords, the East India Company have not arbitrary power to give him,

the King has not arbitrary power to give him, your Lordships have not, nor the Commons, nor the whole Legislature. We have no arbitrary power to give, because arbitrary power is a thing which neither any man can hold nor any man can give. No man can lawfully govern himself according to *his own will*, much less can one person be governed by the will of another. We are all born in subjection, all born equally, high and low, governors and governed, in subjection to one great, immutable, pre-existent law, prior to all our devices, paramount to all our ideas, antecedent to our very existence; by which we are knit and connected in the eternal frame of the universe. This great law does not arise from *our* conventions or compacts; on the contrary, it gives to our conventions and compacts all the force and sanction they have. Every good gift is of God! All power is of God! And He who has given the power, and from whom alone it originates, will never suffer the exercise of it to be practised upon any less solid foundation than the power itself. If all dominion of man over man is the effect of the Divine disposition, it is bound by the eternal laws of Him who gave it. If men were mad enough to make an express compact that should release the magistrate from his duty, and declare their lives, liberties, and properties dependent, not upon rules or laws, but upon his mere capricious will, *the Covenant would be void.* The acceptor of it has not his authority increased, but his crime doubled.

"The title of conquest makes no difference. No

conquest can give such a right; for conquest, that is, force, cannot convert its own injustice into a just title. By conquest, which is a more immediate designation of the hand of God, the conqueror succeeds to all the duties and subordination to the power of God, which belonged to the Sovereign whom he displaced, just as if he had come in by the positive law of descent or election.

"No, my Lords, this arbitrary power is not to be had by conquest. Nor can any Sovereign have it by succession; for no man can succeed to fraud, rapine, and violence, neither by compact, covenant, or submission, for men cannot covenant themselves out of their rights and their duties. Those who give and those who receive arbitrary power, are alike criminal. There is no man but is bound to resist it to the best of his power, wherever it shall shew its face in the world. It is a crime to bear it, when it can be *rationally* shaken off. Nothing but absolute impotence can justify men in not resisting it to the utmost of their ability. Law and arbitrary power are in eternal enmity. Name me a magistrate, and I will name property. Name me power, and I will name protection. It is blasphemy in religion, it is wickedness in politics, to say, that any man *can* have arbitrary power. In every patent of office the duty is included. We may bite our chains if we will; but we shall be made to know ourselves; and be taught that man is born to be governed by Law, and he who substitutes Will in place of it is an enemy to God!" * * * * "The mo-

ment a Sovereign removes the idea of security from his subjects, and declares, that he is every thing, and they nothing; when he declares, that no contract he makes with them can or ought to bind him, he declares war upon them. He is no longer Sovereign; they are no longer subjects. No man, therefore, has a *right* to arbitrary power!"

It is a striking circumstance that the Tartar conquerors, the scourges of the eastern world, and the most unequivocal robbers of any race that earth has seen, should have, not seldom, aspired to the fame of great moralists. The "Ten Precepts of Genghiz Khan" are alluded to by Burke as remarkably pure from all suggestion of Tyranny. Of the "Institutes of Tamerlane" he declares, "That there is no book in the world which contains nobler, more just, more manly, or more pious principles of government." On the trial, he produced this book, and read from it the leading clauses. Of those we shall give a few sentences, as curious remembrances of a mighty man whose wisdom was learned in the wilderness, whose morality was gained on horseback, and whose rights were the rights of the sword. Under those circumstances the Institutes of Tamerlane exhibit an extraordinary power of mind. The preamble is grand; it has the Oriental dignity without the Oriental extravagance.

"Be it known to my fortunate sons, the conquerors of kingdoms, to my mighty descendants, the lords of the earth, that since I have hope in Almighty God, that many of my posterity shall sit upon the throne of

power; having established laws for my dominions, I have collected those laws as a model for others, to the end that every one of my children, descendants and posterity, acting agreeably thereto, my empire, which I acquired through hardships, difficulties, perils, and bloodshed, by the Divine favour, and the influence of the holy religion of Mahomet, (God's peace be upon him!) and with the assistance of the powerful descendants and illustrious followers of that prophet, may be by them preserved." * * * * " Now therefore be it known to my sons, the fortunate and illustrious, to my descendants, the mighty subduers of kingdoms, that in like manner as I, by *Twelve Maxims*, attained to regal dignity, conquered kingdoms, and decorated the throne of my empire, let them act according to those principles, and thus preserve the splendour of their dominion.

" Among the rules that I established for the support of my glory and my empire, the *first* was this,—That I promoted the worship of Almighty God, and propagated the religion of Mahomet throughout the world. *Secondly*, with the people of the 'Twelve Classes and Tribes,' I conquered kingdoms, and from them I formed my assembly. *Thirdly*, by consultation, and deliberation, and caution, and vigilance, I vanquished armies, and I reduced kingdoms." * * " *Fourthly*, by order and discipline, I so firmly established my authority, that the soldiers and the subjects could not aspire beyond their respective degrees. *Fifthly*, I gave encouragement to my ameers and to my soldiers, and

with money and jewels I made them glad of heart. I permitted them to come in to the banquet; and in the field of blood they hazarded their lives; and by the edge of the sword I obtained the thrones of seven-and-twenty kings." * * " When I clothed myself in the robe of empire, I shut my eyes to safety, and to the repose which is in the bed of ease; and from *the twelfth year of my age* I travelled over countries, and combated dangers, and formed enterprises, and vanquished armies. *Sixthly*, by justice I gained the affections of the people of God, and I extended my clemency to the guilty as well as to the innocent, and I passed the sentence which truth required. *Seventhly*, I selected and treated with veneration the posterity of the prophet, and the theologians, and the teachers of the true faith, and the philosophers and the historians. *Eighthly*, I acted with determination; and on whatever undertaking I resolved, I made that the only object of my attention, and I withdrew not my hand from that enterprise until I had brought it to a conclusion; and I acted according to that which I said; and I dealt not with severity towards any one; and I was not oppressive in any of my actions, *that God Almighty might not deal severely towards me*, nor render my own actions oppressive unto me." * * * * " *Ninthly*, the situation of my people was known unto me; and those who were great among them I considered as my brethren, and I regarded the poor as my children." * * * " *Tenthly*, whatever horde, whether Turk or Taucheek, Arab or

Ajum, came into me, I received their chiefs with respect, and their followers I honoured according to their degrees; and whoever had been my enemy, and was ashamed thereof, and, flying to me for protection, humbled himself before me, I forgot his enmity, and I purchased him with kindness." * * * * *Eleventhly*, my associates and my neighbours, and all such as had been connected with me, I distinguished in the days of my prosperity; and, as to my family, I rent not asunder the ties of blood and mercy; I issued not commands to slay them, or bind them with chains." * * * " *Twelfthly*, soldiers, whether friends or enemies, I held in esteem; and the man who drew his sword on the side of my enemy, and preserved his fidelity to his master, him I greatly honoured; and when such a man came unto me, knowing his worth, I classed him with my faithful associates, and I valued his fidelity." * * * * " And, behold, it was known unto me by experience, that every empire, which is not established in morality and religion, nor strengthened by regulations and laws, from that empire all order, grandeur, and power shall pass away, and that empire may be likened unto a naked man, and to a house that hath neither roof nor gates, but into which whosoever willeth may enter unhindered; therefore I established the foundation of my empire on the morality and the religion of Islam, and by regulations and laws I gave it stability." * * * * *

The purpose of quoting this volume on the trial, was to strike the ground from under the feet of all who

attempted to vindicate the Governor-General's conduct, on the assumed maxims of Indian despotism. The plea had been, that, if tyrannical, he was urged to the tyranny by the rules of native government. The Institutes of the great founder of the chief throne of India were adduced to disprove this charge; and, if the Indian princes had preserved the spirit of the rules as carefully as the letter, the imputation must fail. But, with the vigour of Timour his justice, wild as it was, had passed away; and, if Hastings had desired to shelter crimes tenfold deeper than his own were ever supposed to be, under the wing of Indian atrocity; it was broad enough and black enough to have covered them from the keenest eye of human retribution.

In treating of the charge of receiving presents, a form of Oriental bribery, of which Hastings was charged with being a zealous favourer, he suddenly burst forth:—"He who would set up a system of corruption, and justify it upon the principle of utility, is staining not only the nature and character of office, but that which is the peculiar glory of the official and judicial character of this country. My Lords, it is certain that even tyranny itself may find some specious colour, and appear as a more severe and rigid execution of justice. Religious persecution may shield itself under the guise of a mistaken and over-zealous piety. Conquest may cover its boldness with its own laurels, and the ambition of the conqueror may be hid in the secrets of his own heart, under the veil of benevolence, and make him imagine that he is bringing

temporary desolation upon a country, only to promote its ultimate advantage. But, in the principles of that governor who makes money his object, there can be nothing of this. There are here none of those specious delusions, that look like virtues, to veil either the governed or the governor. His pretensions to merit are, that Mr Hastings squeezed more money out of the people than others could have done." * * * "Governors, we know, cannot with their own hands be continually receiving bribes, for they must have as many hands as one of the idols in an Indian temple. As he has many offices, so he has many officers for receiving and distributing his bribes, some white and some black. The white men are loose and licentious, apt to have resentments, and to be bold in revenging them. The black are secret and mysterious; they are not apt to have very quick resentments; they have not the boldness and liberty of language which characterises Europeans. They have fears, too, for themselves, and thus they will conceal any thing committed to them by Europeans; and thus it is almost impossible to make up a complete body of his bribery; you may find the scattered limbs, and while you are picking them up here and there, he may escape entirely in a prosecution for the whole."

One of the incidental charges against the Governor-General had been, that he made visits to the native princes, and then, accepting, in place of the customary hospitality, a sum of money, turned the whole process into a system of violent extortion. "Two hundred

pounds a-day for a visit!" exclaims the accuser; "it is at the rate of L. 73,000 a-year for himself. By his account, he was giving daily and hourly wounds to his humanity in depriving of their sustenance hundreds of the ancient nobility of a great, fallen kingdom. Yet it was in the midst of this galling duty, it was at the very moment of his tender sensibility, that from the collected morsels plucked from the famished mouths of hundreds of decayed, indigent, starving nobility, he gorged his ravenous maw with L.200 a-day for his entertainment. In the course of all this proceeding, your Lordships will not fail to observe, he is never corrupt but he is cruel; he never dines with comfort but where he is sure to create a famine. He never robs from the loose superfluity of standing greatness, he devours the fallen and the indigent. His extortion is not like the generous rapacity of the princely eagle, which snatches away the living, struggling prey; he is a vulture, who feeds upon the prostrate, the dying, and the dead. As his cruelty is more shocking than his corruption; so his hypocrisy has something more frightful than his cruelty. For whilst his rapacious and bloody hand now signs proscriptions, and now sweeps away the food of the widow and the orphan, his eyes overflow with tears, and he converts the balm that bleeds from wounded humanity, into a rancorous and deadly poison to the race of man."

In some of the papers for the defence, Hastings had expressed his astonishment that he should stand as a culprit before the country, when, if justice were done,

he should have been receiving its rewards for sustaining the British Government in the wild, ruthless, and refractory state of India. This plea was met with indignant sarcasm on the part of his great accuser. "Here," said he, "Mr Hastings changes his ground. The first era of his corruption was a bold, plain, ferocious, downright use of power. In the second, he is grown a little more guarded, the effect of subtlety. He appears no longer as a defendant; he holds himself up with a firm, dignified, and erect countenance, and says, I am not a delinquent, I am not here any longer as a receiver of bribes. No! I am a great inventive genius, who have gone out of all the ordinary roads of finance, have made great discoveries in the unknown regions of the science, and have for the first time established the corruption of the supreme magistrate as a principle of resource for Government."

CHAPTER X.

Speeches on the Trial—Styles of Sheridan and Burke Contrasted—Striking Remark of Hastings.

Burke was a moralist and a metaphysician by nature. His oratorical impressiveness was strongly connected with the weight of those maxims which he had formed from a long and profound study of the heart of man. And it is the force and abundance of those fine reflections which give an immortal value to his works on topics of the most temporary nature. He had heavily charged Hastings with corruption in peculiar instances. He now extended it to principle. "But once convict a man of bribery in any instance, and you are furnished with a rule of irresistible presumption that every other irregular act, by which unlawful gain may arise, is done upon the same corrupt motive." * * * * * "His conduct upon those occasions may be thought irrational. But, thank God, guilt was never a rational thing; it distorts all the faculties of the mind, it perverts them, it leaves a man no longer in the free use of his reason, it puts him into confusion. He has recourse to such miserable and absurd expedients for covering his guilt, as all those who are used

to sit in the seat of judgment know have been the cause of the detection of half the villanies of the world. God forbid, that guilt should ever leave a man the undisturbed use of his faculties. For as guilt never rose from a true use of our rational faculties, so it is very frequently subversive of them. God forbid, that prudence, the supreme director of all the virtues, should ever be employed in the service of any of the vices. No, it is never found where justice does not accompany it; and if it is ever attempted to bring it into the service of the vices, it immediately subverts their cause. It tends to their discovery, and, I hope and trust, finally to their utter destruction."

A large portion of those successive addresses was occupied with Indian details. The labour of collecting them must have been immense; the acuteness by which their strength and weakness were detected, under all the difficulties of foreign habits of concealment, aided by European dexterity of complication, exhibited in the most striking degree the logical force of Burke's mind; and the lustre which his strong passion, and living language, threw over the length and dryness of the subject, rendered the whole confessedly the most striking display of mental power in the annals of the Legislature. Sheridan's famous speeches on the Begum charge had excited a more sudden captivation. But his task was of another order. Unencumbered by details, his imagination was at liberty to fly from one prominent point to another, choosing the spot on which, like Milton's Angel, it might scatter fragrance

and shoot splendour from its plumes. Burke's was the sterner labour of forcing his way through the intricate, hewing down the rugged, and taming the refractory. His path, however varied by height and depth, was confined by the nature of his duty to the ground; perpetually in the act to soar, he was perpetually brought back to the level of the soil, bound down to the consideration of the common things of common life, and, for the noblest purposes, those of establishing the cause of justice and virtue, forced to cling to the track, and wind his way through the obliquities of vulgar chicane and obscure villany. His emblem might be found less in the enchanter, touching at will the dark and rude into brightness and beauty; than in the ancient Hero, one of the old earth-tamers, pursuing his career of ridding earth of robbers and monsters, until the time when his task was accomplished, and he was to be called to the banquet of immortality.

The impeachment of Hastings finally failed. The evidence against him was insufficient to justify the punishment of a man of unquestionable fidelity to his employers, of personal honour, and of official talent. The Peers, wearied by the length of the procedure, in itself amounting to a formidable penalty, acquitted Hastings as impatiently as they had entered into judgment on him. But his great accuser came forth free, from the severest investigation of his motives. His indignation had been roused by a sense of Indian suffering. He disdained to take into account the difficulties of the

time, the habits of the Indian government, or the natural growth of arbitrary measures in the hands of even the purest administrators of authority, eight thousand miles from home, surrounded by intrigue, threatened with hourly ruin, and all but forced into violence through the mere dread of universal extinction. But those were the reasons of polity. Burke stood upon rigid principle. The Legislature bowed to the difficulties of circumstances, and acquitted Hastings of acts in India which might have been incapable of pardon in England. Burke would not stoop to comprehend this, as he called it, geographical morality; he denied that justice could be altered like the human complexion, and that the same features of eternal law should be black within the tropics, and white as they advanced towards the pole. He could not comprehend that the moral feeling should change more than the senses, and demanded why the eye of the mind should not see as straight in Bengal as it saw in England, or why it should discover policy in bad faith, directness in artifice, honour in circumvention, and good government in the legislation of the sword; though the sun burned in the zenith, or the land was swept alternately by the Tartar and the tornado.

His heart was right, but his philosophy was wrong. For gratuitous tyranny there can be no defence, as for gratuitous artifice there can be no palliation. But there may be times, when a stronger necessity than man was ever commanded to oppose, throws all the old rules of morals into confusion. The man with a dagger at his

throat kills his adversary, and none call it murder. The man perishing of famine, seizes the first food within his reach, and none call it robbery. No law of earth has condemnation for either, and law is the voice of Providence, uttered by the lips of man. The paroxysm of self-preservation converts injustice into a right, and violence into a protective principle. Burke himself, at a maturer period, could acknowledge that "the statues of mercy and justice might be veiled in the war of the vices." The only barrier that society can erect against this general invasion of its peace, is that the necessity should be fully shewn; that it should allow no factitious suffering to be substituted for the true agony; that it should not yield to dexterous imposture the submission due only to the melancholy rights of madness and misery.

The brief peroration of the speech was majestic. "In the name of the Commons of England, I charge all this guilt upon Warren Hastings, in this last moment of my application to you.

"My Lords, what is it that we want here to a great act of national justice? Do we want a cause, my Lords? You have the cause of oppressed princes, of undone women of the first rank, of desolated provinces, of wasted kingdoms!

"Do you want a criminal, my Lords? When was so much iniquity ever laid to the charge of any one? No, my Lords, you must not look to punish any other such delinquent from India. Warren Hastings *has not left*

substance enough in India to nourish such another delinquent.

"My Lords, is it a prosecutor that you want? You have before you the Commons of Great Britain as prosecutors; and, I believe, my Lords, that the sun in his beneficent progress round the world, does not behold a more glorious sight than that of men, separated from a remote people by the material bounds and barriers of nature, thus united by the bond of a social and moral community, the Commons of England, resenting, as their own, the indignities and cruelties offered to the people of India."

From thus laying out the branches of his principal appeal, he took occasion to pay a series of stately compliments to the King, the Royal Family, and the Peerage. "Do we want a tribunal? My Lords, no example of antiquity, nothing in the modern world, nothing in the range of human imagination, can supply us with a tribunal like this. Here we see virtually in the mind's eye that sacred majesty of the crown under whose authority you sit, and whose power you exercise. We see in this invisible authority, what we all feel in reality and life, the beneficent powers and protecting justice of his Majesty. We have here the Heir Apparent to the Crown, such as the fond wishes of the people of England wish an Heir Apparent of the Crown to be. We have here all the branches of the Royal Family in a situation between majesty and subjection, between the sovereign and the subject, offering a pledge in that situation for the support of the

rights of the Crown, and the liberties of the people, both whose extremities they touch. My Lords, we have a great hereditary Peerage here. Those who have their own honour, the honour of their ancestors, and of their posterity to guard, and who will justify as they have always justified, that provision in the constitution by which justice is made a hereditary office. My Lords, we have here a new Nobility, who have risen, exalted by various merits, by great military services, which have extended the fame of this country from the rising to the setting sun. We have those, who, by various civil merits and talents, have been exalted to a situation which they well deserve, and in which they will justify the favour of their Sovereign.

"My Lords, you have here also the lights of our religion, you have the Bishops of England, you have that true image of the primitive church in its ancient form, in its ancient ordinances, purified from the superstitions and the vices which a long succession of ages will bring upon the best institutions. You have the representatives of that religion which says that their God is Love, that the very vital spirit of their institution is Charity. * * * Those are the considerations which animate them, and will animate them against all oppression; knowing that he who is called first among them, and first among us all, both of the flock that is fed and of those who feed, made Himself the 'Servant of all.'

"My Lords, those are the securities which we have in all the constituent parts of the body of the House.

We know them we reckon upon, we rest upon them, and commit safely the interests of India and humanity into your hands. Therefore, it is with confidence, that, ordered by the Commons,

"I impeach Warren Hastings, Esquire, of high crimes and misdemeanours.

"I impeach him in the name of the Commons of Great Britain, in Parliament assembled, whose Parliamentary trust he has betrayed.

"I impeach him in the name of all the Commons of Great Britain, whose national character he has dishonoured.

"I impeach him in the name of the people of India, whose laws, rights, and liberties, he has subverted, whose properties he has destroyed, whose country he has laid waste and desolate.

"I impeach him in the name, and by virtue of those eternal laws of justice which he has violated. I impeach him in the name of human nature itself, which he has cruelly outraged, injured, and oppressed, in both sexes, in every age, rank, situation and condition."

Those speeches, which had occupied six days, and ended on February 19th, 1788, were followed by the opening of the first article of the Impeachment by Fox, on the 22d, supported by Mr, subsequently, Earl Grey. The evidence was then adduced, and the whole was summed up by Mr Anstruther on 11th of April. The evidence on the second charge was next summed up by Sheridan in his famous speech on the 3d of June. The King's illness then intervened; nearly a year

elapsed, and it was not till April, 1789, that Burke was enabled to address the Peers once more. He then opened the sixth charge, that of bribery and corruption. The delay of the trial had been used by the friends of Hastings as a plea against the severity of having any trial at all. Burke strongly replied to this plea in the first instance. "We know," said he, "that by a mysterious dispensation of Providence, injury is quick and rapid, and justice slow. And we may say, that those who have not patience and vigour of mind to attend the tardy pace of justice, counteract the order of Providence, and are resolved not to be just at all. We, therefore, instead of bending the order of nature to the laxity of our characters and tempers, must rather conform ourselves, by a manly fortitude and virtuous perseverance, to continue within those forms, and to wrestle with injustice, until we have shown, that those virtues which wickedness sometimes debauches into its cause, such as vigour, energy, activity, fortitude of spirit, are called back and brought to their true and natural service; and that in the pursuit of wickedness, in following it through all the winding recesses and mazes of its artifices, we shall show as much vigour, as much constancy, as much diligence, energy, and perseverance, as others can do in endeavouring to elude the laws, and triumph over the justice of the country.

In examining some details of the cruelty to which the Indian tax-gatherers urged their office, he thus gave his philosophy of outrage:—"It is the nature of

tyranny and rapacity never to learn moderation from the ill success of first oppressions. On the contrary, all oppressors, all men, thinking highly of the methods dictated by their nature, attribute the frustration of their designs to the want of sufficient rigour. Then they redouble the efforts of their impotent cruelty, which producing, as they must ever produce, new disappointments, they grow irritated against the objects of their rapacity; and their rage, fury and malice, implacable because unprovoked, recruiting and reinforcing their avarice, their vices are no longer human. From cruel men they are transformed into savage beasts, with no other vestige of reason left, but what serves to furnish the inventions and refinements of ferocious subtlety for purposes of which beasts are incapable."

In alluding to a large sum of money, of which no account was given, he burst out into strong reclamation. "Charity is the only virtue that I ever heard of, that derives from its retirement any part of its lustre; the others require to be spread abroad in the face of day. Such candles should not be hid under a bushel. Like the illuminations which men light up when they mean to express great joy and magnificence for a great event, their very splendour is a part of their excellence. We, upon our feasts, light up our whole city. We, in our feasts, invite all the world to partake them. Mr Hastings feasts in the dark; he feasts alone. He feasts like a wild beast. He growls in his corner over the dying and the dead, like the tigers of that country, which drag their prey

into the jungles. Nobody knows of it till he is brought into judgment for the flesh which he has destroyed. This is the entertainment of Tantalus; an entertainment from which the sun hides his light."

The trial lingered through various postponements, until the world grew weary of charges which seemed endless, and the accused became an object less of personal vindication than of popular sympathy. His friends now exerted themselves with growing activity. The dignity of the great tribunal before which Hastings was arraigned, had at first appalled them; but as they became accustomed to the sight, the terror passed away, their vigour was renewed, and all the instruments of dexterous intrigue, contemptuous recrimination, legal subtlety, and, it must not be denied, solid reasoning, were set in motion. Parliamentary influences, too, had begun to operate. Fox and India were names of unfortunate connexion. The mind and the measures of Pitt had cast the politics of Opposition and its once popular leader into the shade; and the fall of the party drew down with it the labours of Burke in a cause which he had sincerely adopted as the cause of humanity, and sustained by what he as sincerely believed to be the spirit of justice. The trial was now compelled by the force of circumstances to close, and the first sentence of Burke's first speech in 1794, was a contemptuous acknowledgement—that the cause had been dashed to pieces on the rules of the House. This speech, which abounded in powerful passages; the only indulgence which we can now derive from

the whole transaction; was, in fact, a defence of the Managers. It treated severally of the chief points of public blame. They had been charged with using severe language to Hastings. This Burke vindicated, on the ground of the necessity of speaking the truth. "When ignorance and corruption," said he, "have usurped the professor's chair, and placed themselves in the seats of science and virtue, it is high time for us to speak out. We know that the doctrines of folly are of great use to the professors of vice. We know that it is one of the signs of a corrupt and degenerate age, and one of the means of ensuring its further corruption and degeneracy, to give lenient epithets to corruptions and crimes. The world must think that persons who use such terms palter with their sacred trust, and are tender to crimes, because they look forward to the possession of the same power which they now prosecute, and purpose to abuse it in the manner in which it has been abused."

The Managers had been charged with a spirit of vindictiveness. This is finely retorted. "Lord Bacon has well said, that revenge is a kind of wild justice! it is so, and without this wild, austere stock, there would be no justice in the world. But when, by the skilful hand of morality and wise jurisprudence, a foreign scion, but of the very same species, is grafted upon it, its harsh quality becomes changed, it submits to culture, and, laying aside its savage nature, it bears fruits and flowers, sweet to the world, and not ungrateful even to that Heaven to which it elevates its

exalted head. The fruit of this wild stock is revenge, regulated, but not extinguished—revenge transferred from the sufferer to the communion and sympathy of mankind. This is the revenge by which we are actuated, and which we should be sorry if the false, idle, girlish, novel-like morality of the world should extinguish in the breast of those who have a great public duty to perform. This sympathetic revenge, which is condemned by clamorous imbecility, is so far from being a vice, that it is among the greatest of all virtues; a virtue which the uncorrupted judgment of mankind has in all ages raised to the rank of heroism. To give up all the repose and pleasures of life, to pass sleepless nights and laborious days, and, what is ten times more irksome to an ingenious mind, to offer one's self to calumny, and all its herd of hissing tongues and poisoned fangs, in order to free the world from fraudulent prevaricators, from cruel oppressors, from robbers and tyrants, has, I say, the test of heroic virtue, and well deserves the distinction. The Commons, despairing to attain the heights of this virtue, never lose sight of it for a moment. For seventeen years they have, almost without intermission, pursued by every sort of enquiry, by legislative and by judicial remedy, the cure of this Indian malady, worse ten thousand times than the leprosy which our forefathers brought from the East. Could they have done this if they had not been actuated by strong, vehement, perennial passion, which burning like the vestal fire, chaste and eternal, never suffers generous sympathy to grow cold

in maintaining the rights of the injured, or denouncing the crimes of the oppressor?"

The third, and, practically, the principal imputation, was the tardiness of the proceedings. To this an equally brief, but equally sufficient answer is given. "I now proceed, my Lords, to the next recriminatory charge, which is Delay. I confess I am not astonished at the charge. From the first records of human impatience down to the present time, it has been complained that the march of violence and oppression is rapid, but that the progress of remedial and vindictive justice has almost favoured the appearance of being languid and sluggish. Something of this is owing to the very nature and constitution of human affairs. Because justice is a circumspect, scrutinizing, balancing principle, full of doubt even of itself, and fearful of doing wrong even to the greatest wrong-doers; in the nature of things its movement must be slow, in comparison with the headlong rapidity with which avarice, ambition, and revenge, pounce down upon the devoted prey of those violent and destructive passions. My Lords, the disproportion between crime and justice, when seen in the particular acts of either, would be so much to the advantage of crimes and criminals, that we should find it difficult to defend Laws and Tribunals, if we did not look, not to the *immediate*, not to the *retrospective*, but to the *provident* operation of justice. Its chief operation is in its future example. And this turns the balance, upon the total effect, in favour of avenging justice, and reconciles a pious and

humble mind to this great mysterious dispensation of the world."

Burke's remarks on the habits and history of India, had been angrily discussed by the opposing counsel. They had charged him with attempting to perplex the cause by carrying the public mind into the mystic absurdities of Indian ceremonial, by images of Ancient Mythology, and by romances on the triumphs of Tamerlane and Gengis Khan. Those charges peculiarly roused the indignation of the great accuser, and the whole of the speeches scarcely contain a finer burst of oratorical rage than his answer:—"They will shew you, they say, that Gengis Khan, Khouli Khan, and Tamerlane, destroyed ten thousand times more people in battle than this man did. Good Heavens! have they run mad? Have they lost their senses in their guilt? Did they ever expect that we meant to compare this man to Gengis Khan, Khouli Khan, or Tamerlane? To compare a Clerk in a bureau; to compare a fraudulent bullock contractor—for we could shew that his first elementary malversations were in carrying on fraudulent bullock contracts, which contracts were taken from him with shame and disgrace; and restored with greater shame and disgrace—to compare him with the conquerors of the world! We never said he was a tiger and a lion; no, we said he was a weasel and a rat. What we said was, that he has desolated countries by the same means that plagues of his description have produced similar desolations. We said, that he, a fraudulent bullock contractor, exalted to great and un-

merited powers, can do more mischief than all the lions and tigers in the world. We know that a swarm of locusts, however individually despicable, can render a country more desolate than Gengis Khan or Tamerlane. When God Almighty chose to humble the pride and presumption of Pharaoh, and bring him to shame, he did not effect his purpose with tigers and lions. He sent lice, mice, frogs, and every thing loathsome and contemptible, to pollute and destroy the country. Think of this, my Lords, and of your listening here to their long account of Tamerlane's camp of two hundred thousand people, and of his building a pyramid at Bagdad with the heads of ninety-thousand of his prisoners."

The Impeachment was now virtually at an end. The King's illness in 1789, had first checked the proceedings. The dissolution of Parliament in 1790 threatened to extinguish them altogether. The Law authorities declared that the Impeachment had necessarily died with the dead Parliament. Long discussions took place, but at length the question was carried for the renewal of the proceedings: a result which may, not improbably, be attributed to the Ministerial discovery, that the employment of Opposition in Westminster Hall, was a safe diversion of their hostility in St Stephen's. It is certain, that the trial had already exhibited practical effects, strongly injurious to the Parliamentary successes of the Whigs. Their hours were wasted in harangues before the half-empty benches of the Peerage; their activity was thrown away in

ransacking piles of Indian records, their spirits hourly flagged under the growing despair of success, and they felt that their popularity was following the failure of their spirits. No powers of man could for ever keep up a public interest in the concerns of a country with half the world between, and the Orator, who had poured out his eloquence to a thin and wearied auditory at noon, incurred the formidable risk of speaking to deserted benches at night. Fox, Sheridan, and the more worldly and exhaustible portions of the party, had long since relaxed their attendance, and nothing but the enthusiastic vigour of Burke, nerved by that sense of right which made him the foremost champion of all that was generous, high-minded, and pure, in the concerns of man, could have persevered. Still he persevered, and bore the whole exhaustion of the labour, the whole weight ofthe responsibility, and the whole virulence of the crowd of angry interests which fought in the cause of Hastings. In June, 1794, the trial had been all but formally concluded, by the general summing up of the charges by the successive Managers, Burke's reply, of nine days' length, closing the whole. On the 23d of April, 1796, Hastings was *acquitted*, by a large majority of the Peers; the Chancellor, however, voting against him. To complete this long proceeding, in general harmony, Ministers paid it a parting compliment. Pitt moved thanks to the Managers; the motion was seconded by Dundas, and, of course, carried.

The chief injury to the effectiveness of the trial was

the excessive official tardiness of its steps. Hastings had, in fact, undergone two trials, one before the Commons, and another in Westminster Hall. But no part of the delay was attributable to Burke. Hastings had returned to England in 1785, on the 16th of June. On the 20th of the same month, Burke gave notice of an enquiry into his conduct; for the next Session. In June 1786, he opened the first charge. In 1787, Sheridan opened, in January, the Begum charge. The Committee of Impeachment was then appointed. On the 9th of May the Articles were debated, and Pitt gave his vote, in the most direct manner, *for* the Impeachment. No time was now lost, for, on the very next day, Burke accused Hastings at the bar of the House of Lords, in the name of the Commons of England. The trial commenced in Westminster Hall, on the 13th of February 1788. The proceeding had all the dignity that could be given to it by the forms of state. Burke, at the head of the Managers, all in full Court costume, led the way, followed by the Members of the House of Commons, a train of Masters in Chancery and other Officials, the Judges, the Peers, and the Royal Family.

The whole process thus occupied ten years, from 1785 to 1795. Yet so much of it was consumed in delays, entirely official; in Parliamentary prorogations, and legal ceremonial, that if the Court had sat but ten hours a-day, as is customary in the tribunals of law, the trial would have been finished in two months! Justice probably triumphed. But Burke bore all his

laurels untarnished from the field. The nation was full of astonishment at the vast and unremitting power of his appeals, of which, perhaps, the most striking instance was given in the language of Hastings himself. "For the first half hour," said he, "I looked up to the Orator in a reverie of wonder, and, during that time, I felt myself the most culpable man on earth. But, then, I recurred to my own bosom, and there found a consciousness that consoled me under all I heard and all I suffered."

CHAPTER XI.

French Infidelity—Providential Protection of England—Riots of 1780—Power of Pitt—French Revolution—Burke's Singular Sagacity.

It had been the old maxim of the Œconomists of the Continent, that Religion was useless or injurious as a feature of civil polity; and that establishments for Religion were among the worn-out expedients of a system divided between the priest and the King, the tyranny of superstition and the tyranny of the sword. Religion was libelled for the work of the passions. With those declaimers she was the cause of more extravagant ambitions, more profound perfidies, more sanguinary violences, and more incurable subversions of empire, than all other causes combined. The very Spirit of Peace was the great tragic figure in the drama of human suffering; the great mover of those fiercer convulsions and conflagrations, which, bursting up from the depths of society, like the lava, or the earthquake, from sources beyond the reach of man, as utterly perplex all human resistance, as they baffle all human precaution.

The libel had been a thousand times refuted; but it was too congenial to the profligate *liberalism*

of the Continent to be abandoned. At length a proof was to be given, that Atheism could outstrip at a single stride all the horrors that had ever been let loose even by Superstition; that men who had exiled the priest, and broken down the altar, might be more ruthless and sanguinary than even the fiercest persecutor; and that the wiliest perversion of belief, the most flagitious dexterity of imposture, under the abused name of religion, could be thrown into eclipse, by the remorseless craft and prodigal atrocity of a rebellion, whose first proclamation sounded in the astonished ears of Europe, THAT THERE WAS NO GOD!

But a preparatory period was still to be passed. The life of nations is like the life of man. The true philosopher can scarcely fail to discover when nations begin to assume a shape, when they develope their maturer energies, and when they have reached the point of decline. The last ten years of the eighteenth century were evidently marked for a great European crisis. The state of manners, knowledge, and feelings on the Continent, was evidently ripening for some consummate trial. But it was in England that the most marked evidence of a great preparatory agency was given.

The partial failures of Britain in the American war, so loftily compensated by her havoc of the French and Spanish navies on the ocean, had first furnished clear lessons of where the true strength of the country lay. And the national enthusiasm was vigorously turned to that arm, on which was so soon to be staked the safe-

ty of the empire in the greatest of all naval wars. But the finances of England required reinstatement after the vast exhaustion of a six years' contest, carried on at the distance of three thousand miles. An interval, amply adequate to this purpose, was now given. From 1782 to 1789, was a time of the most serene, joyous, and productive peace ever known in Europe. All the active intercourses, the graceful employments, the brilliant luxuries, the opulent commerce of nations, were in unexampled life. The prevalence of perpetual peace; the unassailable amity of all the thrones of Europe; the establishment of codes of national law, which should preclude all jealousies for all time to come, were among the dreams of the hour; but even they were the dreams of vigorous health; passing fantasies, but the native conceptions of minds at ease, and exulting in the glow of the prospect around them. Yet this animated day was but a respite. The sentence which had long gone forth against the guilt of Europe, must be executed; and the exultation of those hours of memorable and almost extravagant enjoyment, was to be followed by the deepest suffering of nations since the fall of the Roman Empire.

England was prepared against the change, by her internal vigour, the activity of her laws, and the purity of her religion. But the great instrument by which the power of the Empire was to be put in motion, was the Minister. Pitt was formed to stand at the head of a great nation in its most perilous time. Bold, pure, high-principled, equally disdaining submission to

the multitude and subserviency to the throne, he sustained both, and he controlled both; by the noblest displays of senatorial ability, he protected the Crown against the aggressions of party in the legislature; by the most vigilant decision, he coerced the violence of faction in the streets. And, for his reward, he saw party rapidly sink into a depth of popular scorn, which extinguished it as an antagonist of Administration; and the old bitternesses of the popular heart, as rapidly changing into the generous and honest pride in the triumphs of their country, which makes the great redeeming quality of Englishmen.

Burke too was to bear an illustrious part in the work of national preservation; and, like the country, he too was to be prepared for his duty. If it seemed extraordinary that a mind so palpably formed for objects above all local and individual interest; that his sleepless energy, fiery enthusiasm, and matchless extent of knowledge, his whole strong sincerity of public virtue, should have been suffered to cast itself away for ten years upon the repulsive labour of the unsuccessful impeachment of an intangible criminal; may we not be entitled to take the remote result for the true solution, and account for this apparent waste of his powers, in its preparative for the nobler struggle to come—the partial combat suffered, merely to administer nerve for that noble measuring of his strength, in which the prize was to be his country;—the great orator, like Homer's hero, sent to invigorate himself in inferior arms and warfare, before the weight of the conflict was to be laid upon

him; and clothed in the panoply of more than mortal workmanship, he was to stand, resplendent in the front of final battle.

Nothing can be more palpable than, that the mental exertion required by the long continuance of the impeachment contributed to the subsequent services of Burke. We can discover its uses in the increased vigour of his judgment, his more mature estimate of party, and the heightened activity, clearness, and brilliancy of his powers; all natural results of this perpetual exercise, and all essential to those crowning efforts, which were so soon to rescue the mind of the Empire from the fierce absurdities of revolution. Unquestionably, unless we are to conceive that all things are under the dominion of chance; that men are in no case *prepared* for the performance of the highest duties to their fellow-men; that the providence, which concerts with such delicate and dexterous arrangement, the whole process of the natural world, leaves the moral totally to itself; we must believe that instruments are prepared for the preservation of kingdoms, as much as the rain is prepared for the germination of the seed, or the sunshine for the ripening of the harvest.

The theory, too, may be true in less important instances than in the history of Burke. There are, probably, few men of any saliency and strength of intellect, who will not be able to trace a preparative process in their minds for the leading events of their public career. But, with Burke, even the practical results of the trial were important. They weaned him large-

ly from that disastrous connexion in which he had been politically born. They taught him the utter uselessness of depending for help in any cause of disinterested manliness or public spirit, on men who were to be moved only by the stimulus of self-interest or popular breath. From that hour, the abscission of all cordial feeling between him and party was begun. He still adhered; because, in England, party divorce is like matrimonial, *prima facie* a matter of disrepute. But the separate mind was already there; and that high-hearted abjuration by which he finally rejected the revolters against the cause of England, and threw down the gauntlet in defence of his country; was only the more formal shape of the principle, which, from this moment, had begun to animate all his feelings.

Still a brief period intervened before the necessity of the national cause was to call for its predestined champion. When the history of those proud days comes to be written, it will probably be found that the safety of England was as *providential*, as the fall of France. The wild havoc of the French Revolution still usurps all eyes, and the politician and philosopher will, for many a year, find some of their most exciting studies in the chain of causes which gradually entangled the stately monarchy of the Bourbons. But preservation may be as full of high design as penalty; and the philosopher who adds to his philosophy the still nobler knowledge of the Christian, may be taught to discover in the training of our country for that great contest, evidences of the most curious and admirable provision for a defence, which was to be consummated, in the victo-

ry, not only of England and her rights, but of the morals and feelings of the civilized world.

To give but the most passing glance at those memorable precautions. The primal ruin of the French monarchy lay in its utter ignorance of the force of the multitude, its foolish reliance on the influence of national affections, and its fatal and incorrigible propensity to believe, in all instances, that the danger was over with the day. On those points, England and France had been in nearly the same state of blindness, down to a period close upon the Revolution.

Twenty years before the Tuilleries was stormed, and the King sent to the block, the English statesman had been as incapable as the French monarch, of believing that the element of political death was in the streets. But, in 1780, a lesson was given to our country, which opened all eyes, and which kept them open. A harmless petition on a constitutional subject, presented through the legitimate channels, to the legitimate source of redress; a Protestant petition against a violation of the national law, carried to the doors of Parliament by a body of orderly remonstrants, suddenly gave birth to the most rapid, furious, and devastating outrage, ever known in England. The principles of law and peace, and even of religion, were instantaneously blackened into public havoc; the cloud no bigger than a man's hand grew before the eye into a tornado, that threatened to hurry before it Church, Monarchy, and Constitution. Its violence was at last checked; but not till the lesson was completely given; till the national mind

was fully awakened to the horrors of rabble fury; till the Government was put in possession of the whole secret of popular violence, on any subject which might hereafter rouse the populace: and, as if the lesson was to be pregnant with important uses in every point of view, the hitherto failing respect of the empire for the libelled character of one of the best Kings that ever sat upon the throne, was, in the course of this hazardous period, cleared from all its clouds, by the evidence of personal manliness, sense, and feeling exhibited by his Majesty George III. Even the character of Royalty itself was illustrated by this public proof of the services which might be rendered by a Monarch during the general perplexity and suspended strength of all inferior authority. Even the date of this extraordinary event seemed to be a part of the same preservative design. If this whirlwind of popular frenzy had come ten or twenty years before, its recollection must have partially faded away; or at least, it could not have been in the personal experience of the generation by whom the furies of Jacobinism were to be controlled. If it had come ten years later, it would have come in the very tumult of Jacobinism, and would have made a parallel revolution in England. But it was placed in the exact point of usefulness; not too far back for personal remembrance, nor too far forward for national preservation.

If this theory be fanciful, nothing could be more unequivocal than the practical results. From that time forth, the eye of Government was fixed with wise vigilance

upon the first movements of popular disaffection; the symptoms of disturbance, which in other times might have been regarded but as ripples on the surface of the popular expanse, were now justly watched, as formidable indications of tempests, that might heave it through all its depths. The universal alarm of England at the now well-known hazard of letting loose the power of the multitude, strengthened the hands of Government, to the fullest extent of providing for the public security; enfeebled the influence of Opposition, until, bringing over the noblest and ablest of its members, it forced the remainder into a virtual exile from Parliament; and placing England in a state of direct hostility with Jacobinism, pointed her out to Europe as the unfailing refuge of religion and law. From that hour, she assumed her true character, and stood the natural, and, thank God, the invincible, defender of the last hopes of human independence, against the last malice of Atheistic and popular passion, embodied in the form of the most grasping and remorseless despotism of the world.

Another of those preparatives was the rapid ascendency of Pitt. The Son of Chatham must have been a powerful authority in any age of the Legislature; but no man is equal to all things, and even his pre-eminent ability must have been heavily impeded, if it had been exposed at once to an Opposition, still retaining public favour, and the embarrassments of a war against the new and startling strength of France. With Fox in possession of the public heart, and French Jacobinism wielding energies that seemed to invest it with a title

to universal conquest, no Ministry could have stood; even the genius of Pitt could have done no more than yield with honour. If he had been summoned to face a French Republican war, at the earlier period, while he was struggling with the India Bill, or the Regency Question in 1788, no strength of mind could have sustained him under such a complication of difficulties. The perpetual assault in Parliament, and the flood of civil trouble, popular discontent, French circumvention, and European terror, must have broken him down at the first outpouring of the war. But, for some years before, every public event had strongly tended to disembarrass the Minister of the encumbrance of Opposition. A series of measures, conceived in the rashness of angry ambition, and urged with the recklessness of political despair, had continued to break down party; until their conduct on the Regency Question seemed to render Fox's fidelity to the name of Whig doubtful, shewed him supporting practices directly adverse to his creed, and, finally, gave his great rival all the advantage of the popular side, thus enabling him to carry his measures through the Legislature with a bold and contemptuous disregard of Opposition. The Regency Question virtually extinguished its whole parliamentary force, and deeply alienated the hearts of its most principled adherents. "Perpetual failure," said Burke, with a vexed spirit, in one of his letters to Lord Charlemont, in 1789, "even though nothing in that failure can be fixed on the improper choice of objects, or the injudicious

choice of means, will detract every day more and more from a man's credit, until he ends without success, and without reputation. In fact, a constant pursuit, even of the best objects, *without adequate instruments*, detracts something from the opinion of a man's judgment. This, I think, may be, in part, the cause of the inactivity of others of our friends who are in the vigour of life, and in possession of a great degree of lead and authority."

A year now elapsed of Parliamentary intermission and public tranquillity. The struggles of party had closed; the House went its customary round of local business; Europe was stagnant; and men in every country began to think that the spirit of public disturbance was laid, that war was to be no more, and that thenceforth the world was to live on its remembrances.

In the midst of this tranquillity a thunderbolt fell in France, that sent its echoes and its flame round Europe; a thunderbolt, like one of the Roman omens, increasing its terrors by falling from a sky without a cloud.—*Intonuit aere sereno.* In July 1789, the Bastile was stormed by the populace of the Parisian suburbs!

A letter written by Burke shortly after to Lord Charlemont, gives a brief but natural view of the first impression of an event so important to every interest of England and Europe, on the mind of the great philosopher of politics. "As to us here, our thoughts of every thing at home are suspended by our astonishment at the wonderful spectacle which is exhibited in

a neighbouring and rival country. What spectators, and what actors! England gazing with astonishment at a French struggle for liberty, and *not knowing whether to blame or applaud.* The thing, indeed, though I thought I saw something like it in progress for several years, has something in it *paradoxical and mysterious.* The spirit it is impossible not to admire, but the *old Parisian ferocity has broken out in a shocking manner.* It is true that this *may be* no more than a sudden explosion; if so, no indication can be taken from it. But, if it should be *character* rather than accident, then that people *are not fit for liberty*, and must have a strong hand, like that of their former masters, to coerce them. Men must have a certain fund of natural moderation to qualify them for freedom, else it becomes noxious to themselves, and a perfect nuisance to every body else. What will be the event, it is hard still to say. To form a solid constitution requires wisdom as well as spirit; and whether the French have wise heads among them, or, if they possess such, whether they have authority equal to their wisdom, is yet to be seen. In the meantime, the progress of the whole affair is one of the most curious that was ever exhibited."

In this simple language the writer expresses the principle of his conduct during the entire progress of the Revolution. He gave France credit for whatever dignity or justice she might display, for the redress of every real injury, and the establishment of every actual advance to freedom. But he had an honesty of heart

unknown to the minor race of politicians. His rectitude felt that public virtue can have no root in public excesses, that the justice which begins in robbery must be spurious, and the liberty which is dipped in innocent blood must be but another name for tyranny. Following the maxims of the highest wisdom, he judged of the tree by its fruits; and when he saw that the first shaking of the leaves was poison, he looked to its whole produce with a feeling of dismay. But, to appreciate the vigour of this foresight, we ought to remember the time. The first intelligence of the French Revolution found the world mad, or made it so. It was hailed by the acclamation of Europe. To the multitude, its sudden glare was not the first flash of an explosion which was yet to shatter the civil frame of nations; but the existence of a new element of splendour—it was the political "Let there be light." The violence of its first shock was regarded not as a threat of the fall of society, but a gorgeous promise of its restoration. All was gloriously changing and to be changed; all abuses were to be swept away, and on the ground which they had so long encumbered, was to rise the fairest temple ever erected to human happiness by the most fortunate labour of man. Old institutions, decrepit beyond the hope of cure, were, of course, to be given over to the grave; but where the art of political counsel had failed since the beginning of government, the power of the pure and mighty spirit of regeneration was to work the wonder; the sepulchre was to give up, and new and brilliant shapes of human happi-

ness, new and stainless forms of the social principle, authority without violence, religion without hypocrisy, the public good undebased by private interests, a general fraternity of all the virtues, were to be thenceforth the inheritance of the auspicious generation of the eighteenth century. In this universal tumult of applause, one man's ears alone could catch the cries of the rancorous and sanguinary assassins, who threw themselves forward in the march of popular liberty. But the warning was sufficient for him, and from that hour he resolved that none should thereafter charge his example with having tempted them to the worship of spoliation, blasphemy, and massacre, under the insulted name of constitution.

With his usual fairness, Burke's first effort was to obtain all possible information of the actual state of the French mind. He maintained correspondences with persons of various grades for this purpose, and, as if he had already felt that he was to act a great part in the coming collision of Monarchy and Republicanism, he started on his route with a vigour proportioned to the magnitude of the object. But at every additional step his views became more decided. In a correspondence with M. Menonville, a member of the National Assembly, who had requested his opinion of public affairs, he says, so early as in October, 1789, "You may easily believe, that I have had my eyes turned with great curiosity, and no small concernment, to the astonishing scenes now displayed in France. It has certainly given rise in my mind to many reflections, and to some emo-

tions. * * * You hope, sir, that I think the French deserving of liberty. I certainly do. I certainly think that all men who desire it, deserve it. It is not the reward of our merit, or the acquisition of our industry. It is our inheritance, the birthright of our species. We cannot forfeit our right to it, but by what forfeits our right to the privileges of our kind; I mean the *abuse or oblivion of our rational faculties*, and a *ferocious indocility*, which makes us prompt to wrong and violence, destroys our social nature, and transforms us into something little better than wild beasts. To men so degraded, a state of strong constraint is a sort of necessary substitute for freedom; since, bad as it is, it may deliver them, in some measure, from the worst of all slavery, the despotism of their own blind and brutal passions. You have kindly said, that you begin to love freedom from your intercourse with me. Permit me, then, to continue our conversation, and to tell you what is the freedom that I love. It is *not* solitary, unconnected, individual, selfish liberty; it is social freedom. It is that state of things in which the liberty of no man, and no body of men, is in a condition to trespass on the liberty of any person, or any description of persons in society. This kind of liberty, indeed, is but another name for justice, ascertained by wise laws, and secured by well-constructed institutions. * * * * I have nothing to check my wishes towards the establishment of a *solid and rational* scheme of liberty in France. On the subject of the relative power of nations, I may have prejudices; but I envy internal free-

dom, security, and good order to none. When, therefore, I shall learn that in France, the citizen, by whatever description he is qualified, is in a perfect state of legal security, with regard to his life, to his property, to the uncontrolled disposal of his person, to the free use of his industry and his faculties; when I hear that he is protected in the beneficial enjoyment of the estates to which, by the course of settled law, he was born, or is provided with a fair compensation for them; that he is maintained in the full fruition of the advantages belonging to his state and condition of life; when I am assured that a simple citizen may decently express his sentiments on public affairs, without hazard to his life or liberty, even though against a predominant and fashionable opinion; *when I know all this of France*, I shall be as well pleased as every one must be, who has not forgotten the general communion of mankind, nor lost his natural sympathy in local and accidental connexions."

It is clear, from those striking developements of his mind, within so unripe a period as two months after the first blow of the Revolution, that Burke had already found the key to the whole mystery. While others saw the Revolutionary shape only assuming the attributes of pomp and festivity, as if to do additional honour to the Monarch; his foresight saw the long train of conspiracy that lurked under this ostentation of loyalty. He also saw in the fatal facility with which the unfortunate King suffered himself to be led into the very place of ruin, the destiny of the " gracious

Duncan" sealed; the Government, the laws, and the Crown, on the point of being thrown at the feet of a bloody, perfidious, and regicidal usurpation. He saw, further still, the fate of that usurpation; and, even at the time when its designs were still cloaked under the most specious covering of patriotism, when all was lofty protestation and extravagant credulity, he could mark the coming of the retributive hour, when the usurpation should feel its treachery recoiling upon itself, and successive factions do the work of justice upon each other; until France, like the she-fiend of Shakspeare, should groan over the memory of her temptations and her successes, and find, that to wash out that one foul spot of royal murder, all remorse was vain.

CHAPTER XII.

Burke's taste for the Arts—Reynolds—Barry—Burke's Criticism on the Pictures at the Adelphi—True cause of Republicanism.

In tracing this outline of the active and virtuous career of Burke, we are not to forget that he had other qualifications than those of the Senate; and that, largely as politics occupied his life, he had a reserve for the gentler purposes of society. No man better knew the value of a general taste for all the acquirements which embellish life, or their use in private intercourse, and even in polishing those more refractory and unmalleable materials of which public fame is made. An acknowledged source of the superiority of his eloquence was to be found in his extensive knowledge of the graceful arts. Giving him vividness of imagery, rich allusions, and spirited variety of topic, it threw an unrivalled charm over his style. He was peculiarly attached to painting, and to its most distinguished professor, Reynolds.

The first two Georges were nearly strangers to this country, and their habits, tastes, prejudices, and patronage, were all foreign. But, George the Third, who had nobly made it his boast that he was " born a Bri-

ton," had the tastes of an English gentleman, and his fondness for the fine arts raised them into sudden popularity. It is a remarkable circumstance, that, in all nations, public liberality is followed by the birth of genius.—Whether the cause may be, that powerful talents are turned from other pursuits into the popular direction; or that Nature, by some ordinance of which we know nothing but the advantage, actually seconds public wisdom by a sudden influx of distinguished powers. At this period a circle of admirable artists cultivated painting. Reynolds held the first rank, by the master qualities of colouring and expression. He was, by the whole construction of his mind, a painter; and, by his peculiar talent, a painter of portraits. Without the elegance of Lely, or the pathetic dignity of Vandyke, he excelled every name of Art, since the days of Charles the First, in depth of feeling, force of character, and splendour of design. Inferior in History to the great masters of the Italian schools, confused in his conception of story, and elaborate, without correctness, in his outline, he was yet remarkable for the habit of making his portraits historic,—a happy skill, which gave novelty to commonplace, and dignity to feebleness. The works of his pencil are still the ornament of the noblest mansions of England, and the pride of the English school. But he also aspired to the praise of the pen; and a series of Discourses on the Fine Arts, which he read from the chair of the Royal Academy, are still among the laws of Taste. But their eloquence betrayed a higher hand, and Burke

has been long conjectured to be their chief writer. The idea is strengthened by the discovery, in his correspondence, of a paper bearing all the features of the Discourses, their criticism, their peculiarities, and their eloquence.

Barry had now returned from Italy, a new subject for the trial of Burke's good nature. But the artist possessed powers which gave strong hopes of his restoration to society. He had undoubted talent, great diligence, and a stern, almost a savage, determination to force mankind into the acknowledgement of his rights to fame. He had just painted the series of pictures for the Adelphi, in desperate defiance of public neglect, and had flung away time and intense labour on this daring attempt to extort justice from the nation. The performance is now beyond criticism. Public opinion has long since pronounced it the imperfect work of strong ability, feeble in parts, but powerful as a whole; often offending the eye by the grotesque in form, and the judgment by the extravagant in conception, but not seldom redeemed by classic grandeur, and vigorous nature. That the mind capable of such a work should have been suffered to fall into obscurity, to feel the bitterness of public neglect, and even the sufferings of personal privation, is among the stains of his age. The tenth part of the sum staked nightly on many a card in St James's, the tenth part of the cost of some ducal dinner, or idle route at the West End—the merest superfluity of languid wealth, would have rescued this able and disastrous man from a pre-

mature grave, probably enriched the arts of England by some pre-eminent memorial, and certainly cleared a signal disgrace from the name of his country.

Barry had opened his work to public inspection before it was finished; in the fantastic idea of deriving benefit from general criticism, and perhaps, too, in that eagerness for praise which makes the fever of the Arts. Burke had, of course, visited this popular exhibition, and he determined to give the artist the full advantage of his advice. But probably his knowledge of the capricious brain with which he had to deal forced caution on him, and he wrote without a name. Anonymous letter-writing, generally an employ of peculiar baseness, was never so honoured before. This letter, marked by the eloquence of taste and truth, should be preserved beside the painting. It forms a new discourse worthy of the *authorship* of Reynold's famous volumes. It commences by unequivocally pronouncing that the series "surpasses any work which has been executed within these two centuries, and, considering the difficulties with which the artist has had to struggle, any that is now extant." He then proceeds to lay down his principles of the arts of design. His sentences remind us continually of the author of the Sublime and Beautiful. He first strongly insists on the practical study of form. "Without an accurate knowledge of forms and colours, the most happy power of combining and abstracting will be useless. * * * * * * The painter who wishes to make his pictures (what fine pictures must be) nature elevated and im-

proved, must first gain a perfect knowledge of nature as it is. Before he endeavours, like Lysippus, to make men what they ought to be, he must first know how to render them as they are; he must acquire an accurate knowledge of all the parts of the body and countenance. To know anatomy will be of little use, unless physiology and physiognomy are joined with it. This is a science which all the theories in the world cannot teach. It is not by copying antique statues, or by giving a loose to the imagination in what are called poetical compositions, that artists will be enabled to produce works of real merit, but by a laborious and accurate study of nature upon the principles observed by the Greeks—first, to make themselves thoroughly acquainted with the common forms of nature; and then, by selecting and combining, to form compositions according to their own elevated conceptions. This is the principle of true poetry, as well as of painting and sculpture. Homer and Shakspeare had probably never seen characters so strongly marked as those of Achilles and Lady Macbeth; and yet we all feel that those characters are drawn from nature. * * * * * The taste may be the gift of nature, the skill may be acquired by study, but the groundworks, the knowledge of limbs and features, must be acquired by practical attention."

One of the common outcries of the day is against portrait-painting, as a narrow, feeble, and mechanical drudgery. Burke was superior to this absurdity, and his sentiments on the subject amount to more than a

vindication, almost to a panegyric. That portrait-painting," says he, " which you affect so much to despise, is the *best* school that an artist can study, provided he studies it, as every man of genius will do, with a philosophic eye. It was in this view that the great painters of the Roman and Bolognese schools collected such numbers of studies of heads from nature, which they afterwards embellished and introduced into their pictures, as occasion required. Hence that boundless variety which is observable in their works, the want of which is the only material fault of your great and masterly picture of the Olympic victors. * * * * There is scarcely a countenance so vacant, but that there are some features which may be of use to a skilful artist. Portrait-painting may be to the painter, what knowledge of the world is to the poet; provided he considers it as a school by which he is to acquire the means of perfection in his art, and not as the object of that perfection. It was practical knowledge of the world that gave the poetry of Homer and Shakspeare that superiority which still exists over all other works of the same kind. It was a philosophic attention to the imitation of common nature, (which portrait-painting ought to be,) that gave the Roman and Bolognese schools their superiority over the Florentine, which excelled so much in theoretic knowledge. I entirely agree with you that the rage of the inhabitants of this country for having their faces painted, whether they are worthy of it or not, is the great obstacle to the advancement of the art, because it makes

that branch more profitable than any other, and therefore makes many men of great talents consider it as the ultimate object of their art, instead of the means of that object. But there is an error on the contrary side not less fatal, which is the contempt young artists are apt to feel for the lower detail of nature, and the forward ambition which they all have of undertaking great things before they can do little ones; of making compositions before they are acquainted sufficiently with the constituent parts. We are told that many ancient artists bestowed their whole lives on a single composition. Such was Apollodorus, who made the Laocoon; and Lysimachus, who made the famous Hercules, destroyed by the Crusaders at Constantinople in the 13th century. We are not to suppose that these great artists employed so many years in chipping one block of marble; but that the greater part of the time was employed in studying nature, particularly the vast and intricate branches of physiology and pathology, in order to execute perfectly the great works which they had conceived.

"Those sciences are, in a manner, neglected by the moderns, but the author of the Laocoon was as deeply skilled in them as Haller or Gaubius, and hence he has been able to give that consistency of expression which prevails through the whole body, from the face, through every muscle, to the ends of the toes and fingers. I was once told by a person who had spent many years in experiments and investigations of this kind, that every discovery he had made disclosed to him fresh

beauties in the wonderful group of Laocoon, and that to understand it thoroughly, would require to know more of the human body than most anatomists attempt to know. It not enough to know the forms, positions, and proportions of the constituent parts of the animal machine; but we should know the nice changes that are produced in them by the various affections of the mind, grief, agony, rage, &c. Without this we may produce splendid compositions and graceful figures, but we shall never approach that perfection to which the ancients arrived."

He then pronounces an opinion which will bring him into disrepute with the ambitious portion of our pictorial age. Michael Angelo and the Sistine Chapel are in the lips of all our artists in historical painting, and to rival the genius of the one, they seem to think it essential to have the space of the other. Thus boldness of effect is supposed to be synonymous with breadth of canvass, and a picture is nothing unless it realizes the fate of the Vicar of Wakefield's family-piece. Barry was one of the most furious advocates for the "Grand Style," and the lecture given to him by the master of taste may be important to all. "There is another erroneous principle extremely general in the present age, and a chief cause of our faulty taste. This is the confounding greatness of size with greatness of manner, and imagining that extent of canvass, or weight of marble, can contribute towards making a picture or statue sublime. The only kind of sublimity at which a painter or sculptor should aim, is to express by cer-

tain proportions and positions of limbs and features that strength and dignity of mind, and vigour and activity of body, which enable men to *conceive and execute great actions.* * * * * A space which extends beyond the field of vision, only serves to distract the eye, and divide the attention. The representation of gigantic and monstrous figures has nothing of sublimity in either poetry or painting, which entirely depends upon expression. When Claudian describes a giant taking a mountain on his shoulders, with a river running down his back, there is nothing sublime in it, for there is no great expression, but merely brute strength. But when Homer describes Achilles advancing to the walls of Troy, clad in celestial armour, like the autumnal star that brings fevers, plagues, and death, we see all the terrible qualities of the hero, rendered still more terrible by being contrasted with the venerable figure of Priam, standing upon the walls of Troy, and tearing his white hair at sight of the approaching danger. This is the true sublime. The other is all trick and quackery. Any madman can describe a giant striding from London to York, or a ghost stepping from mountain to mountain. But it requires genius, and genius experienced in the ways of men, to draw a finished character with all the excellences and excesses, the virtues and infirmities of a great and exalted mind, so that by turns we admire the hero, and sympathize with the man, exult and triumph in his valour and generosity, shudder at his rage, and pity his distress. This is the Achilles of Homer, a character everywhere to be seen

in miniature; which the poet drew from nature, and then touched and embellished according to his own exalted ideas. Had he drawn him with great virtues and great abilities, without great passions, the character would have been unnatural, and of course uninteresting; for a vigorous mind is as necessarily connected with violent passions, as a great fire with great heat.

"The same principle which guided Homer should guide the painter in studying after nature. He should attempt to copy, and not to create. And when his mind is sufficiently stored with materials, and his hand sufficiently exercised in art, then let him select and combine, and try to produce something superior to common nature, though copied from it. But let him not imagine that when he has covered a great extent of canvass with bold and hasty sketches, he has produced a fine picture or sublime composition. Such works, compared with the beautiful and animated compositions of the Bolognese school, put me in mind of Claudian's battle of the giants compared with Virgil's battle of the bees. * * * * * * It is with great concern that I have observed of late years this taste for the false sublime gaining ground in England, and particularly among artists. * * * * * * Homer formed the taste of the Greeks. The shield of Achilles contains all the beauties of picturesque composition which have ever been imagined. Phidias owned that whatever expression of majesty he had been able to give to his Jupiter, was owing to Homer. * * * *

* * I am persuaded that understanding Homer well, would contribute more towards perfecting taste than all the metaphysical treatises upon the arts that ever have or can be written: because such treatises can only *tell* what true taste is; but Homer every where *shews* it. He shews that the true sublime is always easy, and always natural; that it consists more in the manner than in the subject, and is to be found by a good poet or good painter, in *almost every part of nature!* * * * * * * The immoderate size of the pictures of Polygnotus at Delphi was never looked on as worthy of imitation in the more polished ages of Greece, but only to be defended on account of the vast variety of poetical beauties introduced by the genius of the artist. The finest works of Apelles and Zeuxis were either single figures, or compositions which did not exceed three, or at most, five figures."

All this fine lesson was thrown away. Barry still plunged from one error into another, railed at the public for every suffering occasioned by his own pertinacity, clamoured for painting by "acres and furlongs," was finally deserted by the world, and while he was revolving the vengeance that he should take on an ungrateful world in painting St Paul's, or in some equal extravagance, was seized with sudden disease, exacerbated this disease by his vexation of heart, and died.

The French Revolution had now begun its course, and the eyes of England in astonishment, and of the Continent in terror, were attracted to its progress. In

the commencement all had been professed purity; the snow on the summit of the Alps was not whiter in the estimate of the thousands and tens of thousands who stood gazing at its first slide. But its primitive position was soon left behind. Then came the mass, gathering, rushing, and thundering, till all resistance gave way, and it rolled down, sweeping strength and weakness before it, ruining all that it reached, and covering the ruins with a new weight of ruin, which seemed to defy the labours of man. Burke's convictions of this tremendous evil grew by the hour, and in speeches, pamphlets, and letters, he deprecated the insane admiration of Jacobinism. We may well be astonished that such admiration ever existed. Where could be the wisdom of furious overthrow? the security of extinguishing all the habitual defences of states against the violence of popular passion? the justice of exposing the national property to rapine? What was to be expected from the future cultivation of the political soil, when the first act was to break up the sluices, and let loose the waters of pestilence and sterility over it for years? What was to be the answer of Heaven to the offerings of France, from altars where the voice of liberty was mingled with dying agonies, and where parricides and Atheists were the ministers of the worship? But this was a time for the stripping of all political professions. The boasted friends of universal freedom in England took upon themselves the clientship of the bloodiest tyranny ever known. The rage of the Parisian mob found eager advocates among men

proverbial for the haughtiness of their aristocracy; and even the horrid defiances and blasphemous cries of exasperation against England, and all that belonged to the virtues of England, found defenders among men whose watchword was patriotism, whose whole vigilance was ostentatiously employed in exploring every vestige of public vice in their own country, and whose perpetual eloquence was lavished in praise of the immaculate values of the British Constitution.

The true spirit of the French Revolution has never yet been fully developed. The French *narrators* of its sullen and desperate career (for it has never found a historian in France—the genius of the nation is unhistoric,) have assigned to it motives tinged by their personal prejudices. The British writers* have been essayists and pamphleteers, taking the cursory view fitted to objects of the time. But, divesting that Revolution of its disguises, and viewing it with its whole wild and frightful anatomy bare, its characteristics have been neither love of freedom, nor revenge for wrong. The spirit of French Jacobinism, and of all Jacobinism, is combined envy and rapine. The French populace and their leaders cared nothing for the insulted dignity of religion, for the corruption of the law, for the abstraction of the public revenues, or for the levities of kings and courtiers. But they hated the rank which they saw above them, whether virtuous or vicious; and longed to grasp at the property of their superiors,

* Mr Alison's volumes must be excepted; a work of knowledge, manliness, and principle.

whether earned by honour or dishonour. Not one in a million of those who tore down the banners and escutcheons of the French noblesse, who burned their mansions and drank their blood, knew or cared whether they were more or less profligate than their murderers. But they were their superiors; they inherited a place in society which set them over the heads of the clowns, and the clowns were determined to have the grinning triumph of tearing them down.

The cry against the French Clergy was not their impurity or impiety, for individually they were popular; and whether popular or not, the *badauds* of Paris and Versailles cared nothing for their virtues or vices. The church income was the grand count in the indictment, and on the strength of that they massacred as many of them as they could seize, and banished the remainder. In the war of the peasants against the nobility, it was not the gay man of fashion, or the severe feudalist, whom they held as the enemy; their enemy was the possessor of the neighbouring chateau, the master of so many chariots and horses, the possessor of so many services of plate. The rental was the treason, and the plunder of all that he was worth, the formal execution of national justice. No man in France thought that he would be the wiser, purer, or freer for the murder of his King, but thousands and millions rejoiced in that most remorseless act of blood, as the triumph of their vanity: it made every beggar and bandit in France as great as his King, for the time; and the stimulant was enough with the legislators of the streets, to urge them to the murder of every branch of the

Royal Family in their grasp. Such was the lesson of rabble supremacy in France, and such would be the example in England, if, in the vengeance of Heaven, we should ever suffer its leaders to dictate to our Parliament, or domineer over the educated classes of the Empire. With those teachers all change is rapine in prospect; and all patriotism consists in the art of pulling down. Let England beware, for she will have her trial yet; the ground is shaking under her feet, and nothing but the vigilance and vigour which saved her before, under God, can save her again.

In all the great stages of public affairs, there is a time when profession has done its work, and can do no more. In the fable, the storm either blows away the cloak, or fastens it closer; in the first instance, it was the encumbrance or the disguise, worn for either vanity or deceit. Whiggism was now forced to exhibit something of its actual form. Specious speeches on general topics were no longer to be borne, at a time when questions of national life and death were busy. Voluble hypocrisy was to be suffered no longer to flourish; facts of the deepest terror had come to supersede the vague and shewy harangues through whose medium all public principles were presented, equally softened and divergent. The breaking out of the French Rebellion was the dissolving of the spell which had disguised the minds of men in and out of Parliament. Every man's character was forced into full and naked display, by the necessities of the struggle. The two leading parties of the State now started asunder by a more complete division than public exigency had

ever witnessed before; the Revolution was the great gulf between, denying access from either side, and while it lay shooting up horrid flame, and startling the eye and ear with the shapes and cries of torment, it gave to both the image of that fate which awaited weakness, perfidy, and perversion of the laws by which nations are secure.

In this crisis Burke chose his way at once, and had the high distinction of being the first to choose his way, and to be the great guide of all that was sound and pure in the nation, up the steep and difficult road of public safety. He had his sacrifices, and his susceptible and ardent nature was formed to feel the keenness of those sacrifices; loving public applause, strongly affected by private friendship, sensitively alive to the slightest imputation of dishonour, and by long habit attached to the party which he had sustained, guided, and adorned for twenty years, he had before him only the alternative of abandoning all, or adopting the Revolution. His choice was soon made. He gave up his feelings, to retain his principles; threw the cause of party overboard, to welcome the cause of humankind; and in both acheived the highest honour that it is in the competence of a statesman or a commonwealth to obtain or to confer.

The process of separation was rapid. He had already fixed the brand on the abettors of France, by pronouncing their plaudits "a tolerance of crime, an absurd partiality to abstract follies and practical wickedness." In those expressions, he chiefly adverted to

the herd of obscure writers, who, from the first outbreak of French violence, had virulently aspersed the Church and King of England. It was among the ignorant, jealous, and envenomed brood, lingering on the confines of Christianity and infidelity, that the atrocities of the French Revolution found their most pertinacious defenders. The great body of the British people had rejected and loathed it, from the moment when it began to be stained with blood. But the new *illuminate* only loved it the more; identified themselves with its progress at every fresh iniquity; clung to every sanguinary rag that fluttered round its frame; and boasting themselves the elect of religion and freedom, proclaimed day and night the praises of a tyranny that denounced the immortality of the soul, that worshipped a drunken profligate from the streets, and that realized its doctrines of equality, by plundering all alike, and sending the plundered to the promiscuous scaffold.

CHAPTER XIII.

Debate on the Army Estimates—Burke's Schism with Fox—and with Sheridan—Publication of the celebrated "Reflections"—Public honours to its Writer—Visit of Paine to England—Pitt's Views of the Revolution.

The debate on the Army Estimates, (5th and 9th February, 1790,) gave the first decided evidence of the fallen spirit which had entered into the councils of Opposition. In the debate of the 5th, Fox, after a long panegyric on the glories of subversion, had the hardihood to pronounce a direct eulogium on the revolt of the French Guards. He was met by the natural result—a storm of reprobation from the insulted feelings of the House. In the debate of the 9th, Burke spoke, first adverting to the danger of such opinions coming from the authority of such a name. Then entering at large into the question of Democracy, he delivered those immortal sentiments which were to be the sounding of a trumpet to all the generous sympathies of England. While the House was suspended in admiration of the magnificent enthusiasm with which he imagined the grandeur and security of a Revolution founded, like that of 1688, on the true rights of human nature; he suddenly turned to its vio-

lent contrast in the tumults and crimes of French liberty. He declared that he had never loved despotism in any land; he had not loved it the more for its being in France. But there was a despotism more dreadful than ever was wielded by the monarch of any civilized people; and "that was the despotism of a plundering, ferocious, bloody, tyrannical democracy, democracy without a single virtue of republicanism to redeem its crimes. This was so far from being worthy of imitation, as had been said by his honourable friend, that it was worthy of all abhorrence; that he would spend his last breath, the last drop of his blood, he would *quit his best friends*, and join his most avowed enemies, to oppose the least influence of such a spirit in England." This declaration was received with loud applause by the great majority of the House. Pitt himself was among the loudest in its praise. He said, that "former differences could not preclude him from giving his highest admiration, and expressing his strongest feelings of gratitude and reverence for the speaker of those sentiments; sentiments which would be received with the greatest esteem by his country, and which would give down his name to posterity with the most distinguished respect and honour."

In this memorable debate, from which is to be dated the final schism of the Whigs, Fox half redeemed his original error by the temperance with which he bore his rebuke. The question had evidently come to the point of individual feelings, and his reply chiefly adverted to the position which Burke had individually

taken. His speech was almost a panegyric. He declared, "that he had ever entertained the highest veneration for the judgment of his honourable friend; by whom he had been instructed more than by all other men and books together; by whom he had been taught to love our Constitution; from whom he had acquired nearly all his political knowledge, all, certainly, which was most essential, and which he most valued. His speech on that day, some arguments and observations excepted, was one of the wisest and most brilliant flights of oratory ever delivered in that House; still, with all those admissions, his opinions on the general subject continued the same." Burke accepted of those civilities in a few polite expressions; and it has been the opinion of writers on this period, that all might have been reconciled once more, but for the petulance of Sheridan. But this opinion seems to be grounded rather on the habits of private life than of party. The open quarrels of public men are indications less of personal resentment than of divided views. It was impossible that Burke and Fox, after this full announcement of their opinions, could ever cordially agree in their parliamentary course. The separation was already complete. Sheridan's haste and heat only hurried the overt act. He had fancied, or real, motives for hostility. His ambition was thwarted by the high respect paid to Burke by all the graver and more influential heads of the party. The habits, too, of a man like Burke, virtuous and dignified, were silent reproaches to the loose morals, notorious profusion, and

negligent principles of Sheridan. On this occasion he used his strongest epithets to fan the sunken fires of debate, charged Burke with "deserting from the camp, with assaulting the principles of freedom itself; with defending despotism; and with loving to obtrude himself as the libeller of liberty abroad." Burke rose, less irritated than indignant, and loftily expressed his distaste for "language which ought to have been spared, were it only as a sacrifice to the ghost of *departed friendship;* though the language itself was not new to him, it was but a repetition of what was to be perpetually heard at the reforming clubs and societies with which the honourable gentleman had lately become entangled, and for whose plaudits he had chosen to sacrifice his friends, though he might in time find that the value of such praise was not worth the price at which it was purchased. Henceforward, *they were separated in politics for ever.*"

The schism with Sheridan was, of course, beyond all cure. But the obvious consequences of public dissension to the interests of the party so forcibly struck the minds of its principal members, that active means were tried to reconcile two individuals of such importance; and among those was a meeting at Burlington House, at which the Duke of Portland, Fox, Burke, and others of consideration, were present. The discussion continued from ten at night until three in the morning, with a remarkable display of ability on both sides, and closed, as might have been predicted, without satisfying either. The verdict, however, was so

amply given in favour of Burke, that Sheridan took offence with his party, and for nearly a year drew back from Parliamentary business, in vexation or disdain.

Burke had now taken his side. He had come forward as the restorer of Whiggism to the principles of its ancient and better days; the championship of the Constitution. And he was now to shew the powers by which he was qualified to unfurl the banner of patriotic virtue.

He soon gave proof of himself in a work which instantly threw all rivalry into the shade, the memorable "Reflections on the Revolution of France," a work which has seen no equal since its day in knowledge, eloquence, or insight into the tortuous spirit of party abroad and at home; yet still more distinguished by that foreseeing and vigorous conception of the revolutionary career, which makes the whole amount to the most magnificent *political prophecy* ever given to the world. This great performance had been constructed on a large series of papers and memoranda made by its author from the commencement of the Revolution. But that period itself had been brief; and to have matured those views, from July, 1789, to February, 1790, when his volume was probably begun, implied the gigantic diligence of Burke. The announcement that it was in progress, excited the strongest literary and public curiosity; and he himself alluded to it in his correspondence as "deeply occupying and agitating him." It was laboured with even more than his ha-

bitual care of composition; and large portions of it were recomposed, or revised, until his printer, Dodsley, remonstrated. But this frequency of correction in Burke was the result, not of its usual cause, feeble fastidiousness, or rhetorical effeminacy; it flowed from the richness of his resources. The fragments of his manuscripts which remain, shew that not words but things were the objects of his revision. At every fresh return some fine idea found enlargement; some strong feeling was invigorated; some masculine moral was aggrandized into universal application, and coloured into poetic beauty. To speak of the literary triumphs of such a work would be a humiliation. Its objects were of a higher rank than any within the little ambition of such fame as is to be awarded by criticism. It was a great republication of the orginal feelings of a country manly and virtuous enough to have established for itself a British Constitution. It was a manifesto of law, truth, and religious obligation, against boundless license, ferocious perfidy, and the most desperate avowal of national blasphemy that had ever shocked the ears of mankind. It was a great appeal from the virtues of nature and nations against the subversion of every right, happiness, and principle of society.

The mere circulation of this work was unexampled. Within the first year, 19,000 copies were sold in England, and 13,000 in France. The writer received testimonies of public feeling from every quarter of Europe; many of those testimonies from the highest authority. The Sovereigns, assembled soon after at

Pilnitz, transmitted to him an expression of their thanks and admiration. The French Princes at Coblentz complimented him through M. Cazales. The Empress Catherine transmitted her thanks by the Russian Ambassador, Count Woronzow. George the Third, ordered a number of copies to be richly bound, which he gave to those individuals to whom he desired to pay peculiar honour, saying, in his plain but expressive way, "that it was a book which every gentleman ought to read." Stanislaus, the King of Poland, sent him a gold medal with his effigy, and a letter written in English, which, he gracefully said, was the only language fit to convey his opinion of a work of so much talent and virtue.

Burke had been educated at the University of Dublin. That learned body, justly proud of having produced such a pupil, now came forward, and conferred the degree of LL.D. upon him, a proceeding which did equal honour to the University and to Burke; following up the degree by an address, presented in a gold box, "in gratitude for his services as the powerful advocate of the Constitution, the friend of public order, virtue, and the happiness of mankind; and in testimony of the high respect entertained by the University for the various endowments of his capacious mind, and for his superior abilities." A full-length portrait of him was afterwards placed in the Theatre of the College among the most eminent sons of his Alma Mater. The resident graduates of Oxford were the next to offer their tribute, in a long and eloquent

address, transmitted through Mr Windham. The conclusion of this paper was equally panegyrical and true. "As members of an University, whose Institutions embrace every useful and ornamental part of learning, we should esteem ourselves justified in making this address, if we had only to offer you our thanks for the valuable accession which the stock of our literature has received by the publication of your important 'Reflections.' But we have higher objects of consideration, and nobler motives to gratitude. We are persuaded that we consult the real and permanent interests of this place, when we acknowledge the eminent service rendered to both our civil and religious Constitution, by your able and disinterested vindication of their true principles. And we obey the yet more sacred obligation to promote the cause of religion and morality, when we give this proof, that we honour the advocate by whom they are so eloquently and effectually defended."

From the Continent praise continued to pour in upon him. The Archbishop of Aix, and the expatriated French clergy, acknowledged their obligations in the most ardent language, and "rejoiced, that, in the first orator of England, they had found their defender." His name became synonymous on the Continent with the preservation of civil polity. But perhaps the highest, though the most melancholy of all those tributes, the tribute which he would have at once most honoured, and most lamented, was given by the feelings of the illustrious and unhappy Marie Antoinette. In the midst

of those horrid scenes which darkened the final hours of royalty in France, the Queen read the "Reflections," with an interest such as we may well conceive could have been experienced by herself alone. The eloquent compliments to her grace and beauty might have pleased the consciousness of a woman eminent for both; but the fearful power of its pictures of rebellion, of the impending ruin of royalty, and the wild influx of evil that was yet to execute vengeance on the Revolution, created impressions which the Royal Martyr could acknowledge only by frequent tears, if not by the still higher acknowledgment of that confirmed dignity and Christian courage, which sustained her prison hours, and made her, even on the scaffold, superior to the malice of her enemies.

In England the voice of the whole body of established literature was loud in praise of the "Reflections." Burke had sent his volume, before it was printed, to Sir Joshua Reynolds; from whose genius he could borrow nothing, but of whose taste, soberness of mind, and knowledge of human nature, he had deservedly a high opinion. Reynolds, in returning it, expressed the strongest sense of its value. But a less suspected testimony than that of friendship was given by Gibbon, keen and sarcastic as he was, smarting under a sense of official loss, adverse in politics, and fatally blinded in his conceptions of Christianity. After having acknowledged that he looked for the appearance of the work with avidity, and read it with eager delight, "Burke's book," said he, "is a most admirable medicine against

the disease of French principles. I admire his eloquence. I approve his politics. I adore his chivalry. And I can almost forgive his reverence *for Church Establishments.*"

Erskine, overcome by truth and kindred genius, at once threw aside his Whig garb, and shewed himself the Tory, that every man of honour and ability is by nature. "I shall take care," said he, "to put Burke's work on the French Revolution into the hands of those whose principles are left to my formation. I shall take care that they have the advantage of doing, in the regular progression of youthful studies, what I have done even in the short intervals of laborious life; that they shall transcribe with their own hands, from all the works of this most extraordinary person, and from this last, among the rest, the soundest truths of religion, the justest principles of morals, inculcated and rendered delightful by the most sublime eloquence; the highest reach of philosophy brought down to the level of common minds by the most captivating taste; the most enlightened observations on history, and the most copious collection of useful maxims for the experience of common life; and separate for themselves the good from the bad."

But the complete tribute is not given to wisdom or virtue, until they are assailed by folly and vice. The "Reflections" roused the whole host of treason; as the daylight, suddenly let into the haunt of a gang of profligates and plunderers, instantly startles them all. The whole generation of disloyalty, the whole

bitter and obscure tribe, which, too mean for public station, had gratified their malignity by a succession of reptile attacks on the principles of the Constitution which they professed to venerate; the whole festering and corrupted pamphleteering of England, was envenomed into new attempts to infect and debase the public mind, by the consciousness that their extinction was at hand. Their Dagon had been crushed on the groundsil edge, and the whole impure and infamous priesthood of imposture clamoured against the overthrow. The names of those pamphleteers, totally unworthy of remembrance for their literature, and doubly degraded by its use, have perished too long and too completely to be now revived. Paine alone is remembered, and he alone, for his conspicuous iniquity. The remnants of the master-atheist, libertine, and rebel, still protrude themselves from the ignominious grave.

Burke had been drawn into some previous intercourse with Paine. As one of the penalties of party; American principles, reform, and the loose contempt of all forms of worship, which is pronounced Universal Toleration, were among the stigmas, which the fair fame of this eminent person was presumed by strangers to inherit. Thomas Paine, in 1787, had brought with him a letter from Laurens, who had been indebted to Burke for services in his liberation from the Tower in 1781. The Ex-President's letter introduced him as an ingenious person, wishing to make some of his mechanical contrivances known in England. Paine's pamphlet, "Common Sense," had given

him some literary distinction at home, and he was received with Burke's usual kindness, at his house, carried by him during a summer excursion through the iron founderies of the north, and introduced to several men of rank in London. Politics had been professedly abjured by Paine, his whole attention was given to the construction of iron bridges, and for the purpose of gaining some additional information in the office of the "*ponts et chaussées*," he subsequently went to Paris. But there he found again the element of disorder in which he was formed to live. He had quitted America from the subsidence of the storm. In France he found the tossing and the thunders, the fury of a revolutionary tempest, to which the wildest convulsions of his Transatlantic Commonwealth were calm. To the angry and envenomed heart of Paine the prospect of civil rage was irresistible. At once vain, profligate, and malignant, he saw the full indulgence of his nature in a country where the infatuated violence of the mob had broken down all the barriers to obscure ambition, impure pleasure, and personal vindictiveness. Europe could not have offered a more various banquet to an epicure in evil, and he sat down to it, resolved to feed to the full. One of his first acts was to invite his English friends to share the feast. With a zeal which must have singularly blinded him to character, among his earliest missives was a letter to Burke, whom he eagerly urged to introduce Revolution into England, by its established name of "Reform." Burke threw back the temptation, or the insult, at once. "Do you *real-*

ly imagine, Mr Paine," was his reply, " that the constitution of this kingdom requires such innovations, or *could exist with them*, or that *any reflecting man would seriously engage in them?* You are aware that I have, all my life, opposed such schemes of reform, because *I knew them not to be Reform!*" Paine, however, continued his ill-received correspondence; and whether from the delight of molesting Burke, or the expectation of making him a convert to a side which had the grand charm for the conviction of his own profligate heart, plunder; he sent him narratives of the rapidly recurring triumphs of democracy. In one of those he stated, that the Reformers had already determined on the total overthrow of the monarchy; that to carry their principles of subversion into complete agency, they were prepared to involve all France in civil war, " to set fire to the four corners of France," that the army was thoroughly corrupted, and at the disposal of the revolutionary leaders; and that no resistance would be made by it to the uttermost designs of the new regenerators of their country. It is to be remembered that, this letter was written while the whole body of professional patriotism in England was applauding the purity and moderation of France; while the voice of Fox was loud in Westminster pledging himself by every bond of blood and honour to the constitutional integrity of French politics; and while the whole body of Whiggism in Parliament, followed by every club, tavern, and corresponding society, was echoing the sound. Such is the foresight,

or the sincerity of party. The letter was written exactly three days *before the storming of the Bastile!*

There is no principle more capable of proof, than that great public changes must have great causes. In private life the most signal act of guilt may be the work of the briefest time and the lowest instrument. But the revolution which overthrows the ancient power of a kingdom, which reverses the whole venerable institute of a civilized community, and casts up a new shape of society in the spot where the old sank down, must be the work of long years and large instrumentality. It must not be forgotten, as a lesson to the morality of nations, that the Revolution of France was no more the *original* labour of the furious mobs and frantic leaders of Paris, than the axe which fell upon the neck of the unfortunate King, was then first dug from the mine. It had been maturing for a hundred years. Louis XIV., by the perfidious revocation of the edict of Nantes, had commenced that long course of public crime which was to continue until the land loathed itself, and the penalty of universal corruption was to be paid in universal ruin. The exile of Protestantism from France in 1685 extinguished at once the security of the French throne, and the morality of the French people. The King having thus degraded his rank by an act of intolerable treachery, and offended all the true interests of his kingdom by the exile of its most active, intelligent, and virtuous race, proceeded to rouse the alarm of all the European Sovereigns, by the declared projects of aggrandisement to which this violent

measure was the preliminary; thus at once embittering the feelings of mankind against himself as the most cruel of persecutors, and the most treacherous of princes.

The atrocity of this breach of faith was instantly avenged on the chief criminal. The most furious war that Europe had seen since the fall of the Roman Empire, was let loose upon France. It devastated the kingdom for nearly a quarter of a century; beginning within four years from the revocation, and continuing until the close of the War of the Succession in 1713. The peace of Ryswic in 1697, was scarcely an interval of this deadly struggle; at best but a hollow truce, with all the rankling spirit and costly preparation of war.

The first blow of vengeance had now been given. But a deeper judgment was to follow. The extinction of the Scriptures in France had been a direct consequence of the exile of Protestantism. The total corruption of morals was an equally direct consequence of the loss of the great guide of morality. The whole frame of society rapidly became a mass of disease. The Court of Louis and his successor was the leader in all profligacy, the nobility followed its example. The citizens, though excluded from the offices and honours of the nobility, exhibited a full emulation of their vices. The peasantry were divided between licentiousness and superstition. Sensuality was the national system.

Burke had long looked with strong anxiety to the cause of France. His love for the splendid aspect of things had naturally fixed his eyes on a nation eminent

in all that constitutes the decoration of life. He there found the most showy exterior that society ever displayed in Europe; a brilliant court, an army that ranked among the first in romantic courage, great literary institutions, which upheld the dignity of knowledge on a more extended scale than had ever yet been sustained by the wise liberality of monarchs, or the generous devotement of their people; a church establishment of great power, opulence, and patronage, exhibiting the only remnant of freedom in the Romish world, and legislating often in disregard, sometimes in defiance, of Rome; the finest drama, itself the finest portion of popular literature, forming the peculiar delight of France, and modelling the national manners into that mixture of courtesy, sentiment, and elegance, which required only a firmer groundwork in the public morals, to have fixed the highest order of civilisation in the land. There too he saw that great and indispensable element of national strength, the largest and most concentrated population of European kingdoms, twenty-six millions of the most active and ardent, the most elastic and electric of mankind, the most jealous of their fame, the proudest of their country, the most devoted to their King; enthusiasts in all things, in loyalty, in literature, in glory. But there was a side of fearful darkness to the orb which thus threw splendour over Europe, a phase which was already turning, and which, soon sullen and blood-dyed, shewed France and her fortunes only as a phenomenon of terror and ruin in the horizon. A desperate corruption of prin-

ciple, suddenly divided the whole nation between atheistic politicians and infuriate soldiers; all alike susceptible of every reckless impulse; burning for possession, and careless of the price; furious with infidelity, and frenzied with the hope of unlimited dominion.

The sagacity even of the great British minister was not yet awakened to the consequences of intercourse with a people in this state of political ignition. He felt a natural reluctance to rouse the flame by any attempt to extinguish it, while it restricted its ravages to the feeble or decayed parts of the French Constitution; and it would be the highest injustice, not merely to the moral dignity of such men as Pitt and Burke, but to that understanding which no man ever denied to either, to believe that they would not have rejoiced in the clearance of the French monarchy from all that impeded the general health of the national mind; in the sweeping away of every weed and bramble which had grown round the great trunks of the constitution, and letting light and air into every dark and contagious corner of the State. But the difference of their views arose when the practical hazard of the neighbouring nations came to be the question. Pitt was undoubtedly opposed to war. His project was to extinguish the conflagration by leaving it to prey upon itself, and perish for want of materials. Burke's more vivid apprehension of danger, and more prophetic anticipation of the event, saw that its nature was, to spread; that no dexterity of restraint could keep the fire from bursting

over the broadest boundaries which human policy could raise, and that nothing but trampling out the sources of the evil could limit its devastation. But Burke owed this wisdom to a more direct teacher than his political experience. His profound knowledge of human nature, taught by a long struggle through the chances and varieties of middle life, and acquainting him with feelings and tendencies to which the reserved and lofty career of Pitt gave no access, rendered him singularly susceptible on all subjects connected with the temptations of the popular mind. Pitt, educated in the privacy of his noble father's study, had scarcely looked upon general life, when he was summoned to what might almost be called, the *seclusion* of the Cabinet. His business thenceforward lay among those high concerns in which the mind and habits of men all present themselves under their highest, yet their most unnatural, aspect. His associates and agents were ambassadors, generals, the great officers of Government, and the leaders of party. Life passed before him in a perpetual full-dress. All was grave, premeditated, and formal—a grand pageant of Court uniforms, in which the shape of every man's mind was in some degree disguised by the etiquette of his station. With him too, all that was not the Cabinet, was the Legislature. It would, of course, be absurd to doubt that, to the piercing intellect of the greatest minister that England ever saw, human nature could be altogether hidden. But it is beyond all question, that the difficulties of humbler life are essential to the full knowledge of human cha-

racter; and that the free exposure of human motives is to be found only where men have neither hope nor fear to urge them to disguise. No original penetration can discover the countenance of society in the great masquerade of public life; with the certainty and ease of him who meets it when the mask is thrown aside. Thus, while Pitt was solicitous only for the results of the French Revolution among the sovereigns, Burke fixed his intense vision on its progress among the people. While the Minister looked to the undiminished security of thrones, and argued from their strength, that the day of general danger was distant; Burke pointed nervously to the movement among the multitude. To him the pamphlets, the ballads, the rambling oratory of the taverns, the weakest whispers of treason, were the materials of conclusions freighted with the fates of empire. He took his auguries from every wing that flitted across the Heaven.

END OF VOLUME FIRST.

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